The Many-Minded Man

THE *ODYSSEY*, PSYCHOLOGY, AND THE THERAPY OF EPIC

JOEL CHRISTENSEN

MYTH & POETICS II

THE MANY-MINDED MAN

The Odyssey*, Psychology, and the Therapy of Epic*

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To the memory of my father, John, a storyteller
and a man of many ways

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Series Foreword

Gregory Nagy

As editor of the renewed and expanded series Myth and Poetics II, my goal is to promote the publication of books that build on connections to be found between different ways of thinking and different forms of verbal art in pre-literate as well as literate societies. As in the original Myth and Poetics series, which started in 1989 with the publication of Richard P. Martin's *The Language of Heroes: Speech and Performance in the "Iliad,"* the word "myth" in the title of the new series corresponds to what I have just described as a way of thinking, while "poetics" covers any and all forms of preliterature and literature.

Although "myth" as understood, say, in the Homeric *Iliad* could convey the idea of a traditional way of thinking that led to a traditional way of expressing a thought, such an idea was not to last—not even in ancient Greek society, as we see, for example, when we consider the fact that the meaning of the word was already destabilized by the time of Plato. And such destabilization is exactly why I prefer to use the word "myth" in referring to various ways of shaping different modes of thought: it is to be expected that any tradition that conveys any thought will vary in different times and different places. And such variability of tradition is a point of prime interest for me in my quest as editor to seek out the widest variety of books about the widest possible variety of traditions.

Similarly in the case of "poetics," I think of this word in its widest sense, so as to include not only poetry but also songmaking on one side and prose on the other. As a series, Myth and Poetics II avoids presuppositions about traditional forms such as genres, and there is no insistence on any universalized understanding of verbal art in all its countless forms.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

ψυχῆς πείρατα ἰὼν οὐκ ἂν ἐξεύροι ὁ πᾶσαν ἐπιπορευόμενος ὁδόν· οὕτω βαθὺν λόγον ἔχει.

The person who journeys on every road cannot find the limits of the soul by walking. That is how deep its story is.

Heraclitus B45 (= D98)

This book has developed while I read, taught, and lived alongside the *Odyssey* over many years. My first comparisons between the epic and modern psychology came during classes, inspired by serendipitous readings online and in print. Thinking through the ideas of this book has confirmed for me the greater need for all authors to be more humble and honest about how much of writing is a group process; and this applies in greater proportion to someone like me, who has taken on an interdisciplinary project with an immense and complex bibliography. I have learned much about Homer while working on this book, but I have learned even more about myself and what it means to be human.

First and foremost, I owe a deep debt of gratitude to my spouse, Shahnaaz, and our children, Aalia and Iskander, for making my life deeper and richer each year. Second, I must credit the students and colleagues who have talked about Homer with me over the past decade. I cannot footnote every conversation, but I know that each one contributed to the understandings I have today. I would also like to thank the library professionals who found every book and article I requested at the University of Texas at San Antonio and Brandeis University and also the Public Libraries of Boston (Lower Mills and Adams Street), Oak Bluffs, Vineyard Haven, and Quincy, where substantial sections were written while our children read and played.

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Note on Title, Texts, Transliterations, and Translations

I have struggled with the title of this book. While I frequently considered changing the gendered "Man" for its exclusionary nature, I decided to leave it to reflect the first word and theme of this epic (*andra*, "man") and to acknowledge that the *Odyssey* is both a product and a producer of gendered discourse. I do believe, however, that the epic's core reflections about human psychology have universal application. Where the ancient contexts' own prejudices and structures complicate this, we find the most work left to do (as I explore in Chapters 6 and 7).

The Homeric poems are quoted from T. W. Allen's OCT edition of the *Iliad* (1931) and P. Von der Mühll's Teubner *Odyssey* (1962), respectively; Hesiod are from M. L. West's *Theogony* (1966), F. Solmsen's *Works and Days* (1970), and R. Merkelbach's and M. L. West's *Fragmenta Hesiodea* (1967). The text of the Scholia to Homer comes from Erbse (1969) and Dindorf (1855), except in the case where volumes from Pontani (2007, 2013) are available. All other Greek texts are drawn from the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*. Unless otherwise stated translations are my own, for which I have generally opted for usefulness over elegance. In transliterating proper names I used a hybrid system, preferring Latinized forms for names that are widely familiar but a more precise transliteration of the Greek for those less so: so, for example, Achilles and Oedipus (rather than Akhilleus and Oidipous), but Kyknos and *The Ehoiai* (rather than Cycnus and *The Ehoeae*). I ask for the reader's forbearance for any irregularities in this system (e.g., Herakles).

INTRODUCTION

> And when he came back to, he was flat on his back in the beach in the freezing rain, and it was raining out of a low sky, and the tide was way out.
>
> —David Foster Wallace, *Infinite Jest*

David Foster Wallace's *Infinite Jest* ends with one of its primary characters, Don Gately, wandering through his memories, conflating present and past as he dies. The novel's final image (the epigraph above) places Gately on the edge of the sea, a liminal position echoing his brief, final stop between life and death. For me, Gately's end recalls one of the *Odyssey*'s starting points, the ever-delayed appearance of its eponymous hero (5.151–58):

> τὸν δ' ἄϱ' ἐπ' ἀϰτῆς εὗϱε ϰαθήμενον· οὐδέ ποτ' ὄσσε
> δαϰϱυόφιν τέϱσοντο, ϰατείβετο δὲ γλυϰὺς αἰὼν
> νόστον ὀδυϱομένῳ, ἐπεὶ οὐϰέτι ἥνδανε νύμφη.
> ἀλλ' ἦ τοι νύϰτας μὲν ἰαύεσϰεν ϰαὶ ἀνάγϰῃ
> ἐν σπέεσι γλαφυϱοῖσι παϱ' οὐϰ ἐθέλων ἐθελούσῃ·
> ἤματα δ' ἂμ πέτϱῃσι ϰαὶ ἠϊόνεσσι ϰαθίζων
> [δάϰϱυσι ϰαὶ στοναχῇσι ϰαὶ ἄλγεσι θυμὸν ἐϱέχθων]
> πόντον ἐπ' ἀτϱύγετον δεϱϰέσϰετο δάϰϱυα λείβων.
>
> Hermes found [Odysseus] sitting on a cliff. His eyes were never dry
> of tears and his sweet life drained away as he mourned
> over his homecoming, since the goddess was no longer pleasing to him.
> But it was true that he stretched out beside her at night by necessity
> In her hollow caves, unwilling when she was willing.
> By day, however, he stayed on the rocks and sands
> [abusing his heart with tears, groans, and grief],
> Shedding tears as he gazed upon the barren sea.

At first glance, the similarity of these two scenes' locations obscures meaningful differences in the narrative arcs that bring their characters to

littoral and figurative edges. Gately's death and his final moment near the sea are in a sense elegiac, since his narrative has reached its end. Odysseus's tears, however, mark out his isolation and come after years without movement and without story, stretching out before a journey that must still unfold.

Despite this dissimilarity, reading these two passages together has helped me understand both the narrative that precedes Gately's death and the layers of meaning and reflections on consciousness that follow Odysseus's first appearance. Both narratives are about how what we call the *self* is assembled from fragments and reflections; and both stories have much to teach us about the recuperation of agency.

> Εἰ οἱ τοῦ λωτοῦ παρ' Ὁμήρῳ φαγόντες, ὦ ἀμπελουργέ, προθύμως οὕτως προσέκειντο τῇ πόᾳ, ὡς ἐκλελῆσθαι τῶν οἴκοι, μὴ ἀπίστει κἀμὲ προσκεῖσθαι τῷ λόγῳ, καθάπερ τῷ λωτῷ, καὶ μήτ' ἂν ἑκόντα ἀπελθεῖν ἐνθένδε, ἀπαχθηναί τε μόγις ἂν ἐπὶ τὴν ναῦν καὶ δεθῆναι δ' αὖ ἐν αὐτῇ κλάοντα καὶ ὀλοφυρόμενον ἐπὶ τῷ μὴ ἐμπίπλασθαι τοῦ λόγου.
>
> "If those who ate some lotus in Homer desired the plant so eagerly that they completely forgot about their homes, don't doubt that I am addicted to your tale, just like the lotus. Instead of leaving here willingly, I would practically have to be carried off to a ship and tied to it while weeping and mourning at not having my fill of your tale."
>
> —Philostratus *Heroicus* 43.1

This book emerges out of my experiences of teaching, thinking about, and living alongside the *Odyssey*. In part, it is inspired by the efforts of authors like Jonathan Shay (2002) to find connections between modern emotional states and experiences and ancient representations of human life. But the view I take is broader than just the warrior returning home—the *Odyssey* reaches to embrace a totality of life that includes family, work, child-rearing, politics, and more. In the chapters that follow, I explore the extent to which the epic is responsive to human emotions and experiences, how it dramatizes problematic patterns of response to life through its characters, and how it depicts these characters either succumbing to or transcending their challenges. In this process, I see the epic as having a therapeutic function for its ancient and modern audiences.

But first, a few more words on my path to these explorations. Like many classicists I have read and taught the *Odyssey* many times; like a certain type of Homerist, I long affiliated myself with the *Iliad* as a text of

greater power and currency. Indeed, in the years following September 11th, a narrative of a total war—highlighting the trapped humanity on both sides and investigating the tragic fallibility of human beings as individuals and in groups—accrued ever more relevance and force. Yet even armed with these sometimes facile comparisons, I found over a decade of teaching that students simply did not respond to the *Iliad* the way I did. They failed to make connections with the characters; themes with contemporary relevance escaped them; and the epic's plot(s) were too labyrinthine (perhaps better today as a series of stories presented episodically in the fashion of a *Harry Potter* or *Game of Thrones*).

In contrast, teaching the *Odyssey* offered fewer immediate challenges—students were more familiar (and therefore more comfortable) with the general outline of the tale and its characters. This epic also comes with a readymade interpretive hook—most readers arrive looking for a hero and find (especially in my class) a man marked out from the poem's beginning for his failure to bring home his companions ("he suffered many pains on the sea in his heart / as he struggled for his life and his companions' home-coming. / But he could not save them, even though he wanted to," *Od*. 1.4–6). Teaching the *Odyssey* can work a bit like setting up the narrative of a serial drama: *who* and *what* kind of man this hero is introduces an element of mystery that keeps audiences tuning in.

Having a *diachronic* relationship with a work of art or a narrative—that is, a relationship that persists over and through time—allows a reader to develop a complex interpretation and makes a transformative effect on the audience more likely as the pair evolve together over time. When I first fell in love with Homer, I was young—an undergraduate—and Achilles's energy and severe disillusionment struck a strong chord. In the wake of global tumult, the political struggles of the *Iliad* stood out to me—its use of language and contemplation of consensus and action seemed not merely universal but urgently poignant.

But life allowed me to see the *Odyssey* in a new way. After I had been teaching the *Odyssey* for years, I became a father of a daughter and a son and lost my own father in the same eighteen-month period. During the long nights awake with infants and many bleary-eyed drives to work, I immersed myself both in the escape of work and the escapism of literature. It was during this period that I read the *Odyssey* alongside *Infinite Jest*.

Wallace's novel interweaves staggered narratives of figures who suffer from some type of addiction. It opens with a mystery: why is the focal character, Hal Incandeza, whose internal narrative seems so intelligent,

incapable of speaking and acting in a way that does not frighten his interlocutors? Other characters (including Hal) are shown to have their lives dominated by drugs, various obsessions (e.g., tennis, conspiracy, patriotism), and by entertainment (often accompanied by some form of intoxicant). A unifying ground for many of the novel's players is the therapeutic process of a 12-step program. Through these scenes, the characters (and audience) are shown to be as limited by the narratives they tell about themselves as the drugs they take and the stories they hear. When Don Gately dies at the novel's end, it is after he has defended members of his therapy group against violence. His death is not a tragedy (unlike the initial dehumanization of Hal) because he has stopped lying to himself and others about who he is—he has come to terms with his own story and decided to act as he did as an *agent*.

Bit by bit, as I would go to class to teach the *Odyssey* after reading or listening to *Infinite Jest*, the weight of the former exerted itself on my understanding of the latter. At first, I was struck by the simple echo of the *Odyssey*'s Lotus-eaters in the novel's second scene, where we witness the obsessive behavior of a drug user waiting to hear from his dealer as he prepares for a weekend of oblivion, laying up stores of food and entertainment cartridges, setting his voicemail, and calling out of work. I am not the first, by any means, to see drug culture and think of the *Odyssey*.[1] But the *meaning* of the use of drugs, in both novel and poem, is about more than imagination and escape. In his version of his tale, Odysseus describes the Lotus-eaters as sharing their fruit with his men—anyone who partook of it "no longer wished to report back or home / but just longed to stay there among the lotus-eating men / to wait and pluck the lotus, forgetting his homecoming" (9.95–97). Again, at first glance, the thematic weight of these lines is not completely appreciable. In Greek, however, a few key words resonate powerfully with the epic as a whole:

οὐκέτ' ἀπαγγεῖλαι πάλιν ἤθελεν οὐδὲ νέεσθαι,
ἀλλ' αὐτοῦ βούλοντο μετ' ἀνδράσι Λωτοφάγοισι
λωτὸν ἐρεπτόμενοι μενέμεν νόστου τε λαθέσθαι.

They were no longer willing to report back or go home
But they wanted to remain there among the Lotus-eaters,
Munching on the Lotus and forgetting their homecoming.

First, there is a repetition of the theme of return and homecoming in the cognates, the verbal *néesthai* ("to return") and the noun *nóstou* ("home-

coming"). *Nostos* ("homecoming" or "return") is an overriding theme from the epic's inception, where the *failed* homecoming of the companions is marked out twice (νόστον ἑταίρων, 1.5; νόστιμον ἦμαρ, 1.9). But their loss opens a conversation about what *nostos* means to Odysseus. His homecoming is part of his traditional character—he is the Iliadic hero who gets to return home. Any reader of the *Odyssey*, however, learns quickly that a *nostos* is not simply the act of returning home: it stands for both a nearly mystical transformation and a laborious process of reintegration. Authors have shown that the word *nostos* from a diachronic perspective is about a return to "light and life"; here, it translates into an achievement, a moment of rebirth.[2] But any interpretation that attempts to make sense of Odysseus as a character also has to contend with the fact that the epic's *nostos* is a process that returns him to land, home, family and *story* before the poem reaches its completion. The full phrase "forget/or lose track of their homecoming/return" (νόστου τε λαθέσθαι), then, is not merely about making a decision not to return home, but it is also about losing the agency to make such a decision. The verb of forgetting here, *lathesthai*, related to the Greek words for truth (*alētheia*) and the river of forgetfulness *lēthe*, signals that to partake in the Lotus is to engage in a particularly powerful type of erasure. Forgetting a homecoming, in the thematic frame of the *Odyssey*, also means forgetting what a homecoming consists of, the self who left home, and the communal elements constitutive of identity upon a completion of that journey.

Second, and complementing the invocation of the lost homecoming, Odysseus's narration of events later in the epic focuses on his companions' agency and their will, emphasizing not that the men were restrained and incapable of returning, but that they "were not willing" to return home (οὐκέτ' ἀπαγγεῖλαι πάλιν ἤθελεν οὐδὲ νέεσθαι) and wanted (βούλοντο) to remain abroad.[3] For the epic this agency is doubly meaningful. First, as I will discuss in the initial chapter, the epic starts with a strong statement from Zeus that men are in part *responsible* for their own fates (*Od.*1.32–34). In turn, that this agency is part of a willful effort to forget oneself contrasts with Odysseus's efforts *not to forget* his *nostos* and the laborious process of returning home.

Odysseus is marked out as a suffering figure from the beginning of the epic—his story is both figuratively and literally about pain experienced (and distributed) for the sake of pursuing and obtaining a return home. In a way, his state echoes or even anticipates the modern term *nostalgia*, once an official psychopathological diagnosis. On the one hand, Odysseus is depicted as suffering nearly endless pain (*algea*) in striving to complete his

nostos. On the other hand, characters are shown to suffer from something more akin to our modern definition. Our contemporary concept of nostalgia departs a bit from the word's comparatively recent coining for a pathological mental disorder, a mania of longing for the past described by the Swiss physician Johannes Hofer in 1688.[4] Modern clinical studies have identified positive and negative aspects to the cross-culturally observed phenomenon. In one example, when combined with chronic "worriers," nostalgia has been shown to undermine well-being.[5] In others, however, nostalgia has been identified as one of the resources of memory that can help create a stronger sense of self and armor the mind even against existential threats.[6]

Narratives about the past that convey nostalgia can similarly have positive and negative outcomes. Storytelling in the *Odyssey*, as many have shown, is a type of intoxication that has the potential to harm and to prevent one from achieving an actual homecoming.[7] Before Odysseus appears in the epic, we witness the homelife of Helen and Menelaos in Sparta—Menelaos admits to indulging and losing himself in grief (on which, see Chapter 9) and, when she prepares the wine for Telemachus and her husband, Helen spikes it with a powerful drug which "dispels pain, calms anger, and makes men forgetful of troubles" (νηπενθές τ' ἄχολόν τε, **κακ**ῶν ἐπίληθον ἁπάντων, 4.221).[8] This drug could prevent someone from crying even if they were to lose a parent, sibling, or child! Such a moment prompts important questions about the relationship between memory and pain and between story and *nostos*. From the perspective of the epic as a whole, it also lays bare the proposition that homecomings are not necessarily happy. Helen and Menelaos, who have achieved a physical homecoming, pursue a type of forgetfulness that undermines its meaning. Thus, the epic confirms that the physical act of returning home is necessary but not sufficient for a complete *nostos*. A *nostos* is also a return to *self*. What kind of self this may be is a central issue.

What exactly a full *nostos* entails, then, is revealed slowly through the epic's action in the selection and presentation of stories that establish and communicate Odysseus's identity. In this movement, too, I find a theme shared by Wallace's novel. When *Infinite Jest* opens, Hal Incandeza cannot unite his interior monologue with the self as viewed by others: he is a fragmented character, whose narratives diverge and split depending on the perspective. Life, as the novel develops, is lived publicly, not privately. A unified self depends upon a coherent story that is, at least in part, echoed by others. Similarly, Homeric characters have such rare moments of

interior characterization that it is easy to imagine that their *selves* or identities are entirely constructed by those around them. Homeric identity is an external overlay of social roles, speech, and action.

The drug-theme of Wallace's novel and the self-justification that comes with addiction resonated with me particularly—my late father had been a lifelong drug-user and a fantastic storyteller. His drug use and his self-deception were also key to his early and sudden death. In re-reading and re-teaching the *Odyssey*, however, I have realized that the connections run even more deeply. Just as in the *Odyssey*, the characters in *Infinite Jest* find themselves frequently in communal contexts where their stories are tested and vetted, and where we as the audience witness their narratives exerting a force on the actions they take. The novel consistently teases at the relationship between the narrative self and the *self as agent*. Its central context of the 12-step Alcoholics Anonymous group and the theme of the power of narrative and self-deceptions essentially show how some of its characters fail to achieve a *nostos* (a return to a *different* light and life) and how even in death a reunion of sorts is possible. This has made me see the *Odyssey* and its communal storytelling differently—not just in its dramatic presentation of a single man achieving a homecoming, but in its modeling of narrative and agency for its audiences.

When we find Odysseus on the shore of Skheria in Book 5 he is about to embark on internal and external journeys that will eventuate in his *nostos*. But his position is not just physically liminal; he is paralyzed with grief and incapable of deriving physical pleasure, even from sex.[9] When the epic specifies that the "goddess [Kalypso] was no longer pleasing to him" (ἐπεὶ οὐκέτι ἥνδανε νύμφη (5.153), he appears to suffer at the outset what the addicts and depressives of *Infinite Jest* (and outside the novel in real life) experience: *anhedonia*, a cognate with the Greek verb used in the *Odyssey* passage from *handanō* (both are related to the Greek noun for "sweet" [*hēdus*], which is cognate with English sweet through Latin [*suadeo*] words like suave and persuade).[10] Don Gately, on the verge of death, rediscovers some joy in life through action. Odysseus, although not dying, is incapable of action or decision, and experiences no sweetness at all. Part of the story of Odysseus's journey is how he escapes not just from this island, but also from his anhedonic state. And, as I will argue in this book, his state resonates not just with descriptions of general depression, but also with clinical descriptions of severe isolation and a critical lack of agency, or learned helplessness.

It is no secret that the *Odyssey* relates more than a simple tale of a journey home; it is about the re-creation of a man and an investigation

into what comprises an identity. The epic indexes this interest in part through the way it *names* and fails to name its protagonist. Famously, the poem both delays in naming its hero—instead focusing on his qualities as a man (Ἄνδρα) of many ways (πολύτροπον) and as a sufferer (ὃς μάλα πολλὰ / πλάγχθη, 1.1–2)—and postpones revealing him.[11] When it does name him, he is the object of one deity's restraint (τὸν δ' οἷον... πότνι' ἔρυκε Καλυψώ, 1.13–14) and the target of another's rage (νόσφι Ποσειδάωνος· ὁ δ' ἀσπερχὲς μενέαινεν / ἀντιθέῳ Ὀδυσῆϊ, 1.20–21). Contrast this introduction with the beginning of the *Iliad*: the first line names Achilles, grants him some identity with his patronym and makes *his* rage a force that kills others (Μῆνιν ἄειδε θεὰ Πηληϊάδεω Ἀχιλῆος ...). Odysseus is alone (οἷον), longing for a homecoming and his wife (νόστου μεχρημένον ἠδὲ γυναικός, 1.13), and subject primarily to others' desires (e.g., Kalypso) or plans (Athena's help, Poseidon's hatred). And in the subsequent steps of identifying this man, the epic's naming processes force the audience to think about who he might be—he is Odysseus, the son of Laertes and Antikleia who sacked Troy; he is "No man"; he is often simply *that man*; he struggles to become the man identified in the *Iliad* uniquely as the "father of Telemachus" (Τηλεμάχοιο πατήρ ... , *Il.* 2.260; cf. *Il.* 4.354).[12] But the names he lacks hang in the background too: is he the husband of Penelope? Is he the ruler of Ithaca?

Many of the same aspects of identity come into relief again when the gods (and the audience) turn their attention from the trials of Telemachus to Odysseus. In Book 5, Athena questions Zeus and again emphasizes that Odysseus suffers (κρατέρ' ἄλγεα πάσχων, 5.13), that he is forcefully restrained by Kalypso (ἥ μιν ἀνάγκῃ / ἴσχει, 5.14–15), that he is without companions or ships (5.16–17), and that his son's life is in peril (5.18–19). Throughout, Odysseus is defined by what he lacks.

From this point on, one significant thread in the epic's tapestry traces who Odysseus is and how he regains his place in the world. Odysseus's physical return from Kalypso's island, Ogygia, to Ithaca through the Phaeacian Skheria has been recognized as a type of rebirth or journey from death.[13] But, as I will argue (Chapter 4), it also echoes a *therapeutic* return to life. An underappreciated metaphor for this process comes soon after Hermes has ordered Kalypso to send Odysseus home, and the hero is tasked to build his own vessel (5.228–62):

> ἦμος δ' ἠριγένεια φάνη ῥοδοδάκτυλος Ἠώς,
> αὐτίχ' ὁ μὲν χλαῖνάν τε χιτῶνά τε ἕννυτ' Ὀδυσσεύς,
> αὐτὴ δ' ἀργύφεον φᾶρος μέγα ἕννυτο νύμφη,

λεπτὸν ϰαὶ χαρίεν, περὶ δὲ ζώνην βάλετ' ἰξυῖ
ϰαλὴν χρυσείην, ϰεφαλῇ δ' ἐφύπερθε ϰαλύπτρην.
ϰαὶ τότ' Ὀδυσσῆϊ μεγαλήτορι μήδετο πομπήν·
δῶϰε μέν οἱ πέλεϰυν μέγαν, ἄρμενον ἐν παλάμῃσι,
χάλϰεον, ἀμφοτέρωθεν ἀϰαχμένον· αὐτὰρ ἐν αὐτῷ
στειλειὸν περιϰαλλὲς ἐλάϊνον, εὖ ἐναρηρός·
δῶϰε δ' ἔπειτα σϰέπαρνον ἐΰξοον· ἦρχε δ' ὁδοῖο
νήσου ἐπ' ἐσχατιήν, ὅθι δένδρεα μαϰρὰ πεφύϰει,
ϰλήθρη τ' αἴγειρός τ', ἐλάτη τ' ἦν οὐρανομήϰης,
αὖα πάλαι, περίϰηλα, τά οἱ πλώοιεν ἐλαφρῶς.
αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ δὴ δεῖξ' ὅθι δένδρεα μαϰρὰ πεφύϰει,
ἡ μὲν ἔβη πρὸς δῶμα Καλυψώ, δῖα θεάων,
αὐτὰρ ὁ τάμνετο δοῦρα· θοῶς δέ οἱ ἤνυτο ἔργον.
εἴϰοσι δ' ἔϰβαλε πάντα, πελέϰϰησεν δ' ἄρα χαλϰῷ,
ξέσσε δ' ἐπισταμένως ϰαὶ ἐπὶ στάθμην ἴθυνε.
τόφρα δ' ἔνειϰε τέρετρα Καλυψώ, δῖα θεάων·
τέτρηνεν δ' ἄρα πάντα ϰαὶ ἥρμοσεν ἀλλήλοισι,
γόμφοισιν δ' ἄρα τήν γε ϰαὶ ἁρμονίῃσιν ἄρασσεν.
ὅσσον τίς τ' ἔδαφος νηὸς τορνώσεται ἀνὴρ
φορτίδος εὐρείης, εὖ εἰδὼς τεϰτοσυνάων,
τόσσον ἐπ' εὐρεῖαν σχεδίην ποιήσατ' Ὀδυσσεύς.
ἴϰρια δὲ στήσας, ἀραρὼν θαμέσι σταμίνεσσι,
ποίει· ἀτὰρ μαϰρῇσιν ἐπηγϰενίδεσσι τελεύτα.
ἐν δ' ἱστὸν ποίει ϰαὶ ἐπίϰριον ἄρμενον αὐτῷ·
πρὸς δ' ἄρα πηδάλιον ποιήσατο, ὄφρ' ἰθύνοι.
φράξε δέ μιν ῥίπεσσι διαμπερὲς οἰσυΐνῃσι,
ϰύματος εἶλαρ ἔμεν· πολλὴν δ' ἐπεχεύατο ὕλην.
τόφρα δὲ φάρε' ἔνειϰε Καλυψώ, δῖα θεάων,
ἱστία ποιήσασθαι· ὁ δ' εὖ τεχνήσατο ϰαὶ τά.
ἐν δ' ὑπέρας τε ϰάλους τε πόδας τ' ἐνέδησεν ἐν αὐτῇ,
μοχλοῖσιν δ' ἄρα τήν γε ϰατείρυσεν εἰς ἅλα δῖαν.
τέτρατον ἦμαρ ἔην, ϰαὶ τῷ τετέλεστο ἅπαντα·

When morning-born, rosy-toed Dawn appeared,
Then Odysseus immediately donned his tunic and cloak,
And the goddess put on her great silvery robe,
Well-made and well-decorated, and she wrapped her belt around her,
A golden, fine piece, and put her band around her head.
Then she was planning out a departure for great-hearted Odysseus.
She gave him a great ax that was well-sized for his hands,

A bronze one, sharp on two sides. And there was in it
A smooth, well-made handle, well fit in place.
She gave him the smooth tool and then took him on the path
To the farthest part of the island where the tall trees were growing,
Alder, ash, and fir trees reaching to the sky,
Dry for a long time, long-seasoned, perfect for sailing.
Once she showed him where the great trees were growing,
Kalypso, the beautiful goddess, returned to her home,
While he was cutting out planks. The work went quickly.
He picked out twenty altogether and cut them with bronze.
He skillfully planed them down and made them straight with a level.
At the same time, the shining goddess Kalypso was bringing him augers
And he drilled all the pieces and fit them together,
He was working the joints to fit with all the grooves.
As wide as a man who is skilled in wood-working
Traces out the line of a merchant ship—that's
How wide Odysseus made his skiff.
Once he set up the deck beams he attached them to the
Close-placed ribs. And then he finished out the raft with long gunwales.
He fashioned a mast and placed on it a yard-arm.
He also made a rudder to steer with and then
He figured out how to use the brushy willow branches
As protection against the waves around the vessel.
And then Kalypso brought him a bolt of cloth
To make into a sail. He crafted that too, skillfully.
He tied into the raft braces and restraints and sheets,
And using levers, moved it down toward the shining sea.
It was the fourth day and everything was complete.

In a tale that has delayed its hero's entry for five books, it may not be surprising that his return to action is similarly postponed. But the level of detail is clearly an instance of narrative expansion—yes, the building of the raft contributes to an audience's visualization of the craft, but the moment provides more than mere atmosphere. Throughout the scene, the narration emphasizes Odysseus's own ability and decision-making *within the context* of a divinely approved plan. This detailed passage contributes little to the plot, but it is essential to the epic's narrative and its themes. In part, it is about the recuperation of a type of agency. Here, although

the gods authorize his action, Odysseus must act and work for his own homecoming. In this passage's detail and the dramatization of Odysseus's labors, the epic offers an anticipatory metaphor for the rebuilding of the hero's identity. The material available has been there for years—it is not of Odysseus's own making, but his skill and agency are critical for forming it into something new, something that can make a path or journey of its own. The selection of the trees stands in for the selection of stories and aspects of the self that will be reassembled as Odysseus journeys home.

That this is an anticipatory metaphor only becomes clear once the epic has reached its end. I believe that the events around this scene develop a structure that is expanded once Odysseus returns to Ithaca. In short, a brief segment of Book 5 is a model for Books 13–24. First, the two significant elements of Book 5 are recalled by critical scenes from the epic's end. Before Odysseus goes into the grove of trees to build his raft in Book 5, he dines and sleeps with Kalypso in her cave (*Od*. 5.226–27):

ἐλθόντες δ' ἄρα τώ γε μυχῷ σπείους γλαφυροῖο
τερπέσθην φιλότητι, παρ' ἀλλήλοισι μένοντες.

Then, after going into the deepest recess of the hollow cave
They took pleasure in lovemaking, staying next to one another.

These lines are very close to the description of his sexual reunion with Penelope in Book 23 (300–301):

τὼ δ' ἐπεὶ οὖν φιλότητος ἐταρπήτην ἐρατεινῆς,
τερπέσθην μύθοισι, πρὸς ἀλλήλους ἐνέποντες

Thus then, after they each had their pleasure from lovely sex,
They took pleasure in words, telling tales to one another.

Note the similarity of lines 5.227 and 23.301—they are structurally (and nearly syntactically) identical. But where Kalypso and Odysseus merely "are present near one another" (παρ' ἀλλήλοισι μένοντες), Penelope and Odysseus tell each other their stories (πρὸς ἀλλήλους ἐνέποντες) and take pleasure in words (μύθοισι), not just in sex. As will become clear from the following chapters, this repetition with variation conveys a surplus of meaning: narratives (*muthoisi*) are the very things that confirm who Odysseus is to himself, his wife, and his father. And, the replacement of the bland participle μένοντες ("remaining near") with ἐνέποντες ("telling stories") drives this home: the verb *ennepe* is the word

the narrator uses when requesting the epic's tale in line 1 and chimes throughout the epic to mark its most important tales.[14]

These two scenes of lovemaking—one nearly mechanical and empty, the other followed by a reaffirmation of identity through shared storytelling—also precede trips to groves of trees. Where Odysseus must chop one grove down to regain his passage home (and participate in the metaphor of the recreation of the self), he uses the other as a metonym to reunite himself with his father. After his father bursts into lamentation in response to his lies, Odysseus announces who he is, but Laertes doubts him (24.328–44):

εἰ μὲν δὴ Ὀδυσεύς γε, ἐμὸς πάϊς, εἰλήλουθας,
σῆμά τί μοι νῦν εἰπὲ ἀριφραδές, ὄφρα πεποίθω.
τὸν δ' ἀπαμειβόμενος προσέφη πολύμητις Ὀδυσσεύς·
οὐλὴν μὲν πρῶτον τήνδε φράσαι ὀφθαλμοῖσι,
τὴν ἐν Παρνησῷ μ' ἔλασεν σῦς λευκῷ ὀδόντι
οἰχόμενον· σὺ δέ με προΐεις καὶ πότνια μήτηρ
ἐς πατέρ' Αὐτόλυκον μητρὸς φίλον, ὄφρ' ἂν ἑλοίμην
δῶρα, τὰ δεῦρο μολών μοι ὑπέσχετο καὶ κατένευσεν.
εἰ δ' ἄγε τοι καὶ δένδρε' ἐϋκτιμένην κατ' ἀλωὴν
εἴπω, ἅ μοί ποτ' ἔδωκας, ἐγὼ δ' ἤτευν σε ἕκαστα
παιδνὸς ἐών, κατὰ κῆπον ἐπισπόμενος· διὰ δ' αὐτῶν
ἵκνεύμεσθα, σὺ δ' ὠνόμασας καὶ ἔειπες ἕκαστα.
ὄγχνας μοι δῶκας τρεισκαίδεκα καὶ δέκα μηλέας,
συκέας τεσσαράκοντ'· ὄρχους δέ μοι ὧδ› ὀνόμηνας
δώσειν πεντήκοντα, διατρύγιος δὲ ἕκαστος
ἦην; ἔνθα δ› ἀνὰ σταφυλαὶ παντοῖαι ἔασιν,
ὁππότε δὴ Διὸς ὧραι ἐπιβρίσειαν ὕπερθεν.

"If truly you are my child Odysseus come home,
Signal to me an easily recognizable sign that I might believe."
Very-clever Odysseus answered him as he spoke:
"First, recognize this scar with your eyes,
The one a boar tore into me on Parnassos with his white tusk
When I went there. You and my queen mother sent me
To her father Autolykos so that I might gain gifts,
The ones he promised and guaranteed to me when he came here.
So, come, and let me describe to you the trees in this well-planned orchard
Which you once gave to me as I asked you about each one

When I was a child as I followed you throughout the garden.
We walked through them; you described and named each one.
You gave me thirteen pear trees, ten apple trees and
Forty fig trees. You set apart fifty rows of vines
To give me too, vines ripening in turn.
There every sort of grape-cluster hangs down
Whenever Zeus's seasons make them heavy from above."

Here, Odysseus uses the groves of trees as a marker in their shared narrative memory of a moment where storytelling united their identity as father and son. In reciting his patrimony—his family "tree(s)"—Odysseus invokes that common link and recreates their identity even as he inverts the relationship of teller and audience.[15] These trees, furthermore, are not the material of ships and war, but instead are the fruit-bearing, life-sustaining groves of his family and his place. Odysseus's ability to narrate a past whose meaning is verified by others and whose articulation cements aspects of his identity caps another process—Eurykleia tells his story in Book 19. He tells the story of another tree he used to build his bed to confirm his identity to Penelope in Book 23. In addition, Odysseus tells this tale after finishing his final lie of the epic.

That this is structural and part of a pattern modeled first in Book 5 is supported additionally by the passage of time. Although there is some debate about Homeric presentation of time—specifically, whether or not the Homeric narrator will regularly depict simultaneous action—there is a pretty strong indication that Odysseus's departure from Ogygia occupies the same amount of story time (the number of days recorded as passed *within* the narrative).[16] Both movements occupy six days:

Table 1.1. Book 5

Day 1	5.1 the gods gather at dawn and send Hermes to Ogygia; Odysseus is found on the shore (5.151); Kalypso and Odysseus dine (5.197–201); they have sex (5.227)
Days 2–5	Dawn Rises (5.228); Odysseus begins to build the raft; on the fourth day, the raft is complete (τέτρατον ἦμαρ ἔην, καὶ τῷ τετέλεστο ἅπαντα· 5.262)
Day 6	On the sixth day, Odysseus departs (fifth day from the beginning of the construction (τῷ δ' ἄρα πέμπτῳ πέμπ› ἀπὸ νήσου δῖα Καλυψώ, 5.263)
	Odysseus sails for seventeen days and nears Skheria on the eighteenth (5.278–79); Poseidon wrecks his ship and he floats for two days and nights and is near the land again on the third (5.388–90) and he falls asleep on the shore (5.492–93)

Table 1.2. Books 13–24

Day 1	14: Odysseus goes to Eumaios, they sleep (14.523)	15: Telemachus leaves Sparta, sleeps at Diokles' house
Day 2	15.301–494: Eumaios and Odysseus dine again and talk through most of the night	15: Telemachus bypasses Pylos for his ship (15.296–300)
Day 3	15.495–500: Telemachus arrives in Ithaca and goes to Eumaios' home (16); the suitors return from their ambush; Eumaios, Telemachus, and Odysseus sleep (16)	
Day 4	17: Telemachus and Odysseus go to their home separately; the suitors go home to sleep (18.427–28); Penelope sleeps (19.600–604); Odysseus sleeps (20.54–55)	
Day 5	20.91: Dawn comes and the suitors return; 21: The Bow; 22: Mnesterophonia; 23.342–43: They sleep	
Day 6	23.345–49: Dawn comes, Odysseus wakes and goes to see his father; the second Nekyia; Testing of Laertes; Ithacan Assembly; Final showdown	

Odysseus begins and ends his journey in groves of trees. He must tear down the first to create a means to return home and recreate his self. But he must narrate and maintain the second to reclaim his self and mark the completion of his return home. The connection between these two events is both structural and thematic. It is also, importantly, suggestively therapeutic. These two ideas—the therapeutic nature of the *Odyssey*'s

presentation of the reclamation of the self and the structural impact of its narration—form the main topics of this book.

To some readers the language I introduce here will be cause for concern, especially in claims of attributing therapeutic effects and psychological knowledge to the Homeric poems. Although I take up this issue head-on in the next chapter, the theoretical apparatus marshalled there will have less force, I fear, than my intuitive response to the epics. Nevertheless, the basic and simplest contention I make is that through long-term engagement with the poems during performance in different contexts, ancient audiences were influenced emotionally and intellectually by them; and that this process shaped the epics too, making them more sensitive to and reflective of human emotional and mental states. This is not of course a completely new suggestion. Both of the ancient authors Porphyry and Iamblichus, for example, record that Pythagoras sang the songs of Homer and Hesiod to encourage healing (*Life of Pythagoras* 34; *Life of Pythagoras* 111–12). And while Jonathan Shay has revivified the idea that the epics are therapeutic, the extent to which Homeric poetry communicates broader psychological understanding has been largely unpursued.[17]

The following chapters function both as arguments in favor of the basic contention I have framed in this introduction and as a series of case studies. These case studies by no means represent an exhaustive or final statement on the *Odyssey*'s—or Homeric epic's—psychological narratives. Indeed, a study of Homeric psychology that treats only one epic can necessarily tell a mere part of the story. The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* evince a basic complementarity that embraces a wide range of life's experiences.[18] There are, of course, obvious lacunae—due to their cultural contexts, the epics are limited in their presentation of non-male and marginalized psychological perspectives, to note important examples. Where the *Iliad* reflects more on death, violence, and political relations (including the important psychological theme of the relationship between self and others), the *Odyssey* offers more insight into the working of an individual mind and its rehabilitation through a homecoming narrative. This tale itself is not just allegorical for the warrior returning home as noted by Jonathan Shay in *Odysseus in America*, but it is a metaphorical contemplation of what a person is made up of—stories.

In each chapter, I explore Homeric analogs for modern psychological theories or frameworks and their effect on the structure of the epic. The

first chapter surveys psychological approaches to Homer and sets out to address one of the thorniest issues I face: identifying insights as psychological in an ancient oral-derived poem without making completely anachronistic and positivistic assertions. In Chapter 1, "Homeric Psychology," I begin with a discussion of Zeus's thematic comments at the beginning of the *Odyssey*—that men are responsible for making their own suffering worse—and suggest that this introduces concerns of agency and mental states into the epic from the beginning. From this brief argument, I proceed to outline a framework of folk psychology as presented by Jerome Bruner and then give an overview of cognitive theories that help us understand the psychological impact of literature and the neurological basis of storytelling. These approaches, I will show, are fundamental in the framing of narrative's psychological effect, but they resonate especially with patterns and concepts present in Homeric epic itself.

The second chapter, "Treating Telemachus, Education and Learned Helplessness," applies L. S. Vygotsky's theory of the Zone of Proximal Development (1978) and introduces concepts from modern studies in Learned Helplessness[19] to explore the ways in which Telemachus's growth and education are models for the epic and their audiences on learning and the development of an agentive self. The pattern set by this process, furthermore, anticipates and helps to structure the delayed appearance of the hero Odysseus. Chapter 3, "Escaping Ogygia, An Isolated Man," uses studies in social isolation, especially among prison populations,[20] and clinical and theoretical approaches to Learned Helplessness to elucidate how the epic depicts Odysseus's mental state. The first five books of the *Odyssey* depict its two major figures—Odysseus and his son Telemachus—as suffering from negative experiences over which they *think* they have no control. But the narrative also provides Odysseus and Telemachus with rehabilitative responses through a series of actions that function therapeutically to change the way the characters view their agency.

The analyses of the first three chapters, which explore species of mental maladaption, prepare for the epic's therapeutic interventions. In Chapter 4, "Odysseus's *Apologoi* and Narrative Therapy," I introduce the post-modern therapeutic approach of Narrative Therapy[21] to argue that the epic shows Odysseus using his tale of travels in order to revise his own past among the Phaeacians, ultimately re-authoring his tale and creating a sense of identity that prepares him to act in the future. This process is therapeutic for the epic's audiences as well, insofar as it advances concerns about agency and human identity explored in the epic's first few books

and models the ways in which identities and concepts of action are constructed through narrative. Through Odysseus's story, the epic affirms that people can be affected negatively by their experiences, that controlling narrative is an important part of agency, and that problematic worldviews can, in fact, be rehabilitated through action and speech. I continue this process in Chapter 5, "Odysseus's 'Lies': Correspondence, Coherence and the Narrative Agent," where I explore differences in how storytelling is used during Odysseus's return, show how the negotiation of self and the expression of agency changes in the lying tales, and suggest that the *Odyssey* presents limits on the rehabilitative effects of narrative power. In particular, I look at how Odysseus manipulates forces of correspondence and coherence in memory as a way to better influence his audiences and thereby become a narrative agent par excellence.

In the subsequent two chapters, I explore how the liberating control over narrative that allows Odysseus to return home has detrimental effects on the people of Ithaca. The stories in the epic's second half can show (1) how Odysseus continues to use narrative in the creation of self, revisiting and revising themes examined in the previous chapters; and (2) how this self and its attendant narrative forms are situated in a community of people whose lives are mediated by and shaped by the stories Odysseus (and his epic) tell. The sixth chapter, "Marginalized Agencies and Narrative Selves," applies insights from disability studies to examine how the epic's rhetoric of agency and narrative control impacts characters who are marginalized: Eumaios, Eurykleia, and the "bad slaves" Melantho and Melanthios. I argue that the epic's rehabilitative approach to narrative does not apply to marginalized figures and instead is shown to have a negative psychological effect. The patterns that develop to help Odysseus arrive home and Telemachus become a man are subverted to restrain the behavior of marginalized figures who tell stories to subordinate rather than activate their agency. After exploring the effects of such cultural discourse, I turn to the framework of gender and agency in Chapter 7, "Penelope's Subordinated Agency," where I offer a longer reading of Penelope alone to examine the ways in which her own agency is curbed by the expectations of social roles and varying levels of internalized oppression.

The final two chapters explore problems in how the epic ends from collective and individual perspectives, emphasizing, to start, psychological theories about collective behavior, agency, and politics to examine the problematic social and political situations in Ithaca where multiple generations of citizens appear traumatized by dead or missing loved ones.

The eighth chapter, "The Politics of Ithaca: From Collective Trauma to Amnesty's End," presents both an analysis of the political situation in Ithaca and relevant theories about collective trauma. This reading offers a new extended treatment of the politics of the *Odyssey*, which forces us to reconsider the heroic presentation of Odysseus by the poet (and by himself). It ends by examining the sudden surprising closure of the epic from the perspective of modern studies in political amnesties.

The final chapter, "The Therapy of Oblivion, Unforgettable Pain and the *Odyssey*'s End," applies insights from cognitive science and approaches to storytelling to address issues of closure in the *Odyssey*'s final book; the results show that the epic emphasizes the danger of its own pleasurable distractions by positioning their closed character as a kind of death. Odysseus, in order to begin his journey home, must choose to face the open tale of life. The psychological theories introduced throughout the book are brought to bear on the interpretive problem of how to end *this* poem. The sudden close points to the importance of life outside the poem and invites the audience to apply the frameworks explored in the poem to the worlds they inhabit without.

The conclusion, "Escaping (the) Story's Bounds," revisits some of the arguments made in the book and surveys ancient allegorical traditions to emphasize that the way we read the *Odyssey*—as a story to be mined for myth and philological detail—is by no means the authoritative way to engage with the poem. I close the book by considering Teiresias' prophecy of the oar mistaken as a winnowing fan as both a symbol for death and an allegory for learning to live outside of paradigmatic narratives.[22] There, I will return briefly to the meaning of that moment of staring out across the sea, shared by Odysseus and *Infinite Jest*'s Don Gately.

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1 Stewart (1976:208–212) sees drugs of all types in the *Odyssey*. For Shay (2002: chap. 4) the land of the Lotus-eaters is an allegory for veterans coping with trauma through substances.

2 For nostos narratives as a return to light and life, see Frame 1978; for nostos as "salvation, not death," see Bonifazi 2009:481–510. In early Greek poetry, nostos is a song that is about home-coming: see Nagy 1999 [1979]:97; Murnaghan 2002:147; Barker and Christensen 2015:85–110.

3 For Platonic and Aristotelian notions of "will" as transmitted by this diction, see Frede 2001:19–30.

4 Beck 2013; cf. Nagy 2013, 297-298 for nostalgia and "bittersweet" yearning for home; and Boym 2001 for an overview of nostalgia in modern use.

5 Verplanken 2012:285–89.

6 Routledge, Wildschut, Sedikides, Juhl, and Arndt 2012:1–9; Sedikides and Wildschut 2016:126–36.

7 For the perils of storytelling, see Chapter 1.

8 For the connection between drugs and poetry in the *Odyssey*, and this episode in particular, see Bergren 2008: chap. 5, "Helen's 'Good Drug'."

9 For the "liminal state" of trauma as neither dead nor truly alive, see Morris 2015:6–7.

10 Not everyone accepts that Odysseus once enjoyed having sex with Kalypso. The imperfect aspect of the verb ἤνδανε, however, implies that his displeasure is (and has been) ongoing. An ancient critic confirms that Odysseus liked her when she saved him, but clarifies that he does not feel the same at this point because she is restraining him (Schol. PQ ad *Od*. 5.153 ex1-2).

11 For the delayed naming of Odysseus, see Peradotto 1990:115; Higbie 1995:170–175; Kahane 1994:59–67 (for the significance of starting the epic with "man," in particular); and Rose 2012:147. For naming formulae in the *Odyssey* in general and Book 5 in particular, see Kahane 1994:121–35.

12 For the use of the demonstrative *keinos* to refer to Odysseus (60 times!), see de Jong 2001:73; cf. the recent work of Passmore (2018:1–27), who argues that the deictic pronoun marks Odysseus as "distant and uncertainly located" (1). For the demonstrative as also signaling epiphany, see Nagy 2013, 119–120.

13 For Odysseus's journey as a rebirth, see Van Nortwick 2009:21–23; cf. Pucci 1987:44–49, for language anticipating rebirth. His time in Skheria has unreal characteristics, too: see Purves 2010:337–40 and Cook 1992. For trauma as a type of death and rebirth, see Morris 2015:52–57.

14 The opening "Muse tell [*ennepe*] of the man of many ways ..." (Ἄνδρα μοι ἔννεπε, Μοῦσα, πολύτροπον ... , 1.1) is echoed by Telemachus's request to hear about the Atreids, "Nestor, son of Neleus, tell [*enispes*] truly ..." (ὦ Νέστορ Νηληϊάδη, σὺ' ἀληθὲς ἐνίσπες, 3.247 = 4.317), and Nestor's advice for him to inquire from Menelaos, "so that he may tell [*enispē*] you truly" (ἵνα νημερτὲς ἐνίσπῃ, 3.327). Odysseus uses similarly marked diction to preface his tale: "Come, I will tell [*enispō*] you of the journey of much grief ..." (εἰ δ' ἄγε τοι καὶ νόστον ἐμὸν πολυκηδέ' ἐνίσπω / ὅν μοι Ζεὺς ἐφέηκεν ἀπὸ Τροίηθεν ἰόντι, 9.37–38). For this verb as indicating infallible memory and as equivalent to the "sing" of the *Iliad*, see Nagy 1996, 51.

15 For the trees as symbols of Odysseus's family, growth, and memory, see Henderson1997. For the tree garden as memory art, see Purves 2010:222. For the trees as also representing epic poems, see Barker and Christensen 2019:276–280. For the character of Odysseus's lie here, see Gainsford 2003:41–59.

16 This sequencing is not universally accepted; see the chronology in Olson 1995:91–119; cf. de Jong 2001:587–90, for problems in the timeline of the *Odyssey* and earlier bibliography on Zielinski's law.

17 Cf. Simon 1978:78: "I believe that Homeric Psychology, the Homeric view of mental life, is embedded in the form, composition, and presentation of the poetry—an argument that has not been developed in classical scholarship."

18 Nagy sees the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* as "constitut[ing] a totality with the complementary distributions of their narrative" (1999 [1979]:18).

19 E.g., Mikulincer 1994.

20 E.g., Gilmore and Williams 2014.

21 E.g., White 2011.

22 For "winnowing shovel" instead of "fan" and the potential ritualized meaning, see Hansen 1977, 38–39. Inserting a shovel into the ground may echo a ritual which marks the end of the harvest and is thus cyclical, even death-related in nature. See Nagy 1990, 232 n.82. and Nagy 2013, 331-337. for this as a symbol of Odysseus' grave and entry into hero cult.

1

HOMERIC PSYCHOLOGY

> Alcidamas called the *Odyssey* a "fine mirror of human life"—καλὸν ἀνθρωπίνου βίου κάτοπτρον
>
> Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1406b12

The *Odyssey* does not merely show emotional depth and inspire identification through its portrayal of homecoming and transformation. It also resonates with multiple theories about human psychology that developed during the twentieth century. I do not mean to suggest that the Homeric epics anticipate the discipline of modern psychology in some positivistic way. Instead, my belief is that the *Odyssey* shows an understanding of aspects of human experience (both functional and what we might call dysfunctional) identified and explored from a different perspective in modern scientific discourse. In emphasizing the resonance between the epic and psychology (therapeutic, cognitive, and theoretical), I aim both to contribute to arguments for the sophistication of Homeric epic (as a genre and a discourse) and to propose a therapeutic function for the performance genre itself. Indeed, I am not the first to propose that an ancient genre has such a function—Peter Meineck has argued that ancient tragedy functioned like "cultural therapy" to its audiences[1]—nor am I the first to frame epic in this way—Bennett Simon (1978) has made some similar arguments. This book, however, presents a reading of the *Odyssey* in its entirety from the perspective of modern psychology and relates it to the general therapeutic function of the poem.

In order to approach both goals, I will first explain my view of psychology in Homer. I will begin by suggesting that the *Odyssey* is particularly interested in a central psychological issue—agency—and that it demands that its audience consider issues of agency and responsibility throughout its plot. Second, and connected to this, I will distinguish my

view of Homeric psychology from prior treatments among Homerists by introducing concepts from Jerome Bruner and Mark Turner (among others), who have written about connections between narrative and literature, on the one hand, and human psychology, on the other. These two authors conceptualize some generalizable concepts—Bruner's "folk psychology" and Turner's "everyday mind"—which provide frameworks for thinking of the *Odyssey* as therapeutic on a social level, especially in the context of repeated performances. In pursuing this last framework, I will start by teasing out some common threads that help to support the *Odyssey* as an investigation of human minds before addressing the issue of the engagement between the epic and collective mentalities.

A. Zeus, Fate, and Human Agency

The *Odyssey* begins with misdirection: the poem promises a tale of wanderings, then delays Odysseus's naming, and begins with comments from an internal audience as the gods gaze not upon a languishing hero or his besieged family, but on an entirely different plot altogether (the story of Aigisthos's death at Orestes's hands, so frequently returned to as a model in the epic to come).[2] We—the external audience—are treated to a compressed reminder of the events, which includes a slightly surprising detail—that Aigisthos was *warned* not to shack up with Klytemnestra and kill Agamemnon.[3]

But before he recites this inset narrative, Zeus interprets the tale to come by providing a moral of his own: "Mortals! They are always blaming the gods and saying that evil comes from us when they themselves suffer pain beyond their lot because of their own recklessness!" (*Od*.1.32–34). Responses to the structural function and meaning of this passage vary—it has been seen as simply starting the action, even though many scholars have noted that Zeus's language recalls the proem's characterization of Odysseus's companions who perished after they ate the cattle of the sun.[4] The language of responsibility invoked here, however, extends beyond the proem and Zeus's comments: throughout the epic, invocations of mortal *atasthalia*, recklessness, set parallel the fate of the companions with the suitors at the epic's end.[5] This initiates a theme that is integral to the *Odyssey* and its use of narrative: From the proem's prolepsis to the bloody struggles at its end, mortals are described as bearing some blame for their own suffering.[6] When such a theme not only initiates the epic but extends *through* it, almost any audience might wonder rather quickly where in this

Odysseus's responsibility fits.

Such an interpretive impulse has met resistance for a long time—the Byzantine scholar John Tzeztes, for example, thought Homer had such a favorable view of Odysseus that he refers to him as "Homer's little darling" (... ναὶ παίγνιον Ὁμήρου Ὀδυσσέα, *Allegories of the Iliad* 7.32).[7] While many modern scholars still see Odysseus as largely blameless, others allow for shared responsibility, even if they do not go as far as Jonathan Shay in preparing the hero's court-martial.[8] It is Odysseus's complexity and multiplicity that prompts such divergent responses *and* that makes him such an effective character for the exploration of human psychology.

Sidestepping Odysseus's character for a moment, another way to put the issue is that our epic is intensely engaged with questions of agency and responsibility and in addressing problematic articulations of causality. Such questions have been framed somewhat differently as critics have explored Homeric epic for its presentation theology and justice.[9] In accepting Zeus's comments as programmatic for the epic as a whole and as an interpretive framework for the audience—if not direct instructions—interpreters have emphasized the epic's interest in prompting contemplation of the limits of human will and action.[10] Such philosophical issues are also psychological and connected to the relationship between the narrative (tradition) and the world, not just of the poem but also of its audiences.

So, a central starting point for this discussion and the work of this book is that many of the arguments we make about Homer, which we consider philosophical or philological, are already psychological in nature. Narrative poetry does not work like a philosophical scientific treatise—as S. Douglas Olson describes it "... Homer's tale represents a careful and consistent meditation on the origin of human troubles and the problem of how we are to live in an apparently chaotic and arbitrary world ...," an opinion echoed by Fred Miller who argues that the point of the epic is not to offer a theory of "agency and responsibility" but instead to raise the relevant questions.[11] The *Odyssey*, as John Peradotto suggests, implicitly integrates into its narrative a series of problem sets for balancing responsibility and causality. For the audience, Odysseus cannot be to blame because everything is already motivated by known outcomes, by fate and divine decree. And, yet, human agency and responsibility are consistently even if problematically emphasized.[12] In this way, we may read Zeus's comments as a redress against the atemporality of myth (where stories are always coming in different sequences) and the

behavioral determinism of a narrative-driven culture.

To summarize and simplify: the Homeric *Odyssey* faces a narrative situation imposed by traditional storytelling in myth, which may present an overly deterministic worldview. This view might posit that Odysseus and even his companions are mere objects of fate and therefore in some way not responsible for their actions. The epic begins by addressing this potential worldview directly: Zeus states clearly that human beings are in fact partly responsible for their sufferings and then provides a striking illustration of how this is true by claiming that Aigisthos had foreknowledge of the consequences of his action and therefore had *agency* in making his decisions. The resulting suffering is, accordingly, also his responsibility. Such a pattern is offered as a heuristic for the stories that follow. This does not mean that each story will satisfy the same conditions, but rather that the opening sequence sets up interpretive guidelines by which the audience will judge the narratives to come.

The term agency itself is a bit loaded—but when I use it I draw on the work of theorists like Shaun Gallagher, who focus not on some absolute category like "will," but instead on an individual's subjective awareness of making decisions to act in the world (200:14–21). (Gallagher and others use the phrase "sense of agency"). When I use *agency* in this book, what I mean is an individual's subjective sense of agency in their world as depicted (again subjectively) by narrative. From a neurological perspective, Kantian "contracausal" free will may very well be illusory—so many of the decisions we make are based on subconscious activities and cultural influences—but self-control and decision-making in response to external causes are demonstrably available to what Patricia Churchland (2013:183–85) describes as a 'normal' brain. And, the ability to exercise self-control appears to be paired neuro-physiologically with the human ability to learn, analyze, and predict outcomes in the world (Churchland 2013:170). But, beyond the neurobio-logical, what I will focus on mostly is representation of the impact of experience and cultural discourse on a given character's (represented) sense of agency. Odysseus, as a heroic figure prized for his intelligence (and self-control), is also a prime test case for epic to explore the tension between what people choose to do in the world and what happens to them.[13] Regardless of theological considerations, then, Zeus's emphasis at the beginning of the *Odyssey* aims at making Odysseus (and his audiences) responsible because of *choice* not *fate*.

Through the medium of storytelling, the *Odyssey* does not set out to resolve the issues it presents clearly or merely to offer some simplistic,

moralizing view (as Zeus appears to at its beginning); instead, it offers a dynamic set of responses and further questions. *How to talk* about who is responsible is a question at the heart of audience responses to Zeus's assertion and applicable as an interpretive framework to all of the epic's players.[14] Because of this, the connection between what we say about why things happen and what we think is possible or in our control is essential to understanding the *Odyssey* as a psychological narrative.[15]

B. Some Theoretical Frameworks

The connections I will draw between the form of the sequential narrative and notions of agency are essential to what I think it means to talk about psychology in Homer. The epic projects and then invites its audiences to reflect upon implicit understandings of the way the human mind works and the limiting effect that prior assumptions about action can have under certain circumstances. Although the approaches and authors I have already mentioned discuss these issues, they do not represent the core of work that has been done on Homeric psychology.

Scholarship on Homeric psychology has focused on theoretical or philosophical questions, such as whether or not Homeric heroes make real decisions, the implications of the lexical range for Homeric expressions of emotions and thought, and cultural implications of these inquiries.[16] These debates, however, have developed alongside, and often apart from, modern reformulations of articulations of agency with scientists weighing the influence of behaviorism and biology against autonomy and philosophers debating the status of free will against ideology and discourse.[17]

More recent publications have illuminated cultural and social issues reflected in the poem through the application of cognitive psychology.[18] Throughout these studies, we find a sometimes explicit assumption that there is a correlation between the worldviews expressed in the poem and those of their (putative) audiences.[19] Psychoanalysts (e.g., Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung) noted the paradigmatic nature of cultural narratives as extensions and expressions of generalizable human psychology.[20] Recently, Siobhan Privitera has argued that Homeric poetry may demonstrate psychological understanding through a "three-way dialogue" that "reaffirms the potential of cognitive science." Reading Homer alongside cognitive science, moreover, can explicate important features of Homeric representation and situate Homeric narrative within the

movement of "cognitive poetics" (Privitera 2018:45).[21] Building on recent studies like these, I believe that the *Odyssey* is psychological because it asks its audiences to consider difficult questions about the relationship between human action (and motivation) and external influences; because it shows through its main characters various possible outcomes along a spectrum of interpreting this relationship; because it models multiple methods for coping with grief, loss, and suffering; and, finally, because by doing so in a context that is repeated and demanding of audience interpretation, the *Odyssey* almost necessarily prompts interpreters to apply the same questions and models to their own lives.[22]

My reading of the epic is informed by modern research ranging from clinical therapy to cognitive science and literary theory. It is possible to perform many of the interpretive moves I anticipate without assembling and defending a theoretical apparatus; nevertheless, the range of disciplines from which such an apparatus may be constructed provides a stronger, interdisciplinary foundation. The interweaving of similar disciplines in reading Homer has of course been attempted before (e.g., Peradotto 1990), but deserves a revision given significant advances in thought about the human mind and cognition in the last generation.

This book's approach is influenced in part by the work of Jonathan Shay who, in his *Achilles in Vietnam* (1996) and *Odysseus in America* (2002), has demonstrated how the emotions and sufferings expressed by Homeric heroes echo those articulated by warriors in the modern era. As a trained psychiatrist and therapist, Shay argues that "... Homer has seen things that we in psychiatry and psychology have more or less missed" (1996:xii).[23] While he reads the *Iliad*'s Achilles as more or less a literal case study in the traumatic effects of war, when turning to the *Odyssey*, Shay finds "an allegory for the real problems of combat veterans returning to society" (2002:2) and proceeds to interpret the epic along these narrow lines.[24] The classicist William H. Race has taken up this proposition in framing the Phaeacians as Odysseus's confessors and therapists (2014). Similarly, Charles Underwood (2018) has seen the epic as a prolonged examination of the development and recovery of the self. Shay's readings of Achilles and Odysseus are moving and insightful—but for the *Odyssey*, especially, his emphasis on the veteran and modern treatments trains his focus away from the generalizability of Odysseus's experiences to all ancient audiences (assuming that audiences included non-veterans, women, children, and enslaved people). In addition, the epic may offer psychological insights by and about other characters, while also expanding upon the structures and themes Shay emphasizes in a part of the story

(mostly Books 9–12) throughout the whole. Odysseus's own narrative certainly reflects the struggles of a warrior returning home psychologically, but the epic is also about defining what it means to be a person, an agent, a member of a family, and a member of a society. Therefore, building upon Shay's important suggestion that the *Odyssey* presents a psychological allegory and Race's insight that Odysseus's performance within the epic to his Phaeacian audience is therapeutic, I approach the epic as a complex and interactive psychological narrative with a therapeutic effect not just available to Homeric epic as demanding literature but also part of its essential function and amplified by its character as a performative cultural discourse.[25]

Inspired by this line of inquiry, I take up some questions of Homeric psychology from a clinical perspective throughout this book, exploring how the epic explores or diagnoses human behavior and suffering by connecting problematic behavior with past experience—and perspectives taken on this experience—then implicitly proposes treatment through its presentation of ameliorative steps performed by its characters. For instance, in Zeus's first comments on Aigisthos' fate, the epic acknowledges that some people might believe the gods are to blame for their situation—thus inducing in humans a state of fatalistic powerlessness—while also proposing therapeutic interventions for such a state (step one: accept at least partial responsibility). These two processes, moreover, are thematically and structurally critical.

C. Narrative/Therapy

One essential foundation of my approach is an acknowledgement of the creative and therapeutic power of narrative. In particular, recent generations have foregrounded the power of ancient mythic narratives to give voice to modern experiences. The Philoctetes project, readings of Homer in prison populations, and performances of tragedy by refugees and survivors of genocide, mark these texts as in some way effective in addressing emotional and commemorative needs.[26] In addition, over the past generation the power of narrative in human culture has become an interdisciplinary theme. For me, the widespread nature of this work helps to establish its currency and significance. Before turning to how this applies to Homer in particular, I want to spend a little time explaining how my own appreciation of storytelling and narrative has evolved.

As an initial point, the twentieth century saw the rise in an

acknowledgement of cultural discourse and myth as species of narrative; and individual narratives have long been seen as variations on or responses to traditional tales. Since the birth of Freudian psychoanalysis (and even earlier), the psychological stakes of stories and the patterns they create/invoke have been central not just for understanding and describing human mental states, but for treating them.[27] Myth is, from this perspective, a collective story that shapes the way we see the world and ourselves in it; it is discourse.[28] As an outgrowth of myth, I believe that Homeric epic in its performance contexts responded to cultural anxieties and discourse over time (and, also helped to subvert and reinforce them). From the diachronic perspective of the epics' development, this means they evolved to contain and reflect the mindsets and debates of multiple periods. From the perspective of a single, even partial, performance—or, the impact of multiple performances in full or episodic form—such collective and culturally authorized reflection on myth would engage intimately with the experiences of storytelling in its audiences.[29] Because of their long familiarity with the story patterns and the characters found in epic, ancient audiences could engage in complex and multiple identifications and re-interpretation over time. Ancient audiences could potentially live with, through, and by the stories they heard.

Narrative as a generative force for human thought and perception has gained renewed emphasis in recent years in public and scholarly consciousness—and I suggest that many of the basic facets of the power of narrative that are now emerging are implicitly if not explicitly fundamental to the *Odyssey*. Much has been made about the thematic importance of storytelling in the *Odyssey*.[30] While emphases on its metapoetic significance are compelling, modern cognitive science and psychology add new layers to what we understand about its *function*. Some neurobiologists, for example, have argued that our brains have developed physically and specifically for the encoding, patterning, and retrieving of narrative.[31] Recent studies in brain science have shown that not only are our brains wired to empathize with fictional characters, but that the experience of narrative can re-wire our brains to inform the way we respond to future experiences.[32] Psychologists and cognitive scientists have also shown that the act of hearing and telling stories is essential not just to the development of a sense of self but even further to the nature and nurture of what we call consciousness.[33]

Fundamental to my approach, then, is the proposal that Greek epic at least partly anticipates the modern conception that stories can shape the way we think and act. Indeed, appreciating the extent to which this may

be true is critical in helping us re-evaluate the epic's messages. In addition to neuro-biological and literary theoretical approaches, modern cognitive science and psychology attests to the importance of storytelling to human life. In his work, Mark Turner has argued that the ability to imagine a narrative sequence is a "fundamental instrument of thought" (1996:4) and that internalizing narrative and projecting it upon external events is "indispensable to human cognition" (5). In this, Turner quickly dispenses with conventional disciplinary boundaries, insisting that qualities we generally ascribe to the literary realm are extensions of the way human thought functions both individually and culturally. From Turner's perspective, we organize and understand events through a process of story and projection whose motivations are "as strong as the motivations for color vision or sentence structure ..." (5). While infants, we begin to internalize narrative sequences that imply causality before we begin to speak. There is, indeed, a connection between this process of creating narrative sequences and the developing of an "autobiographical self"—Charles Fernyhough describes well the emergence of a toddler's capacity to remember events along with the ability to tell stories with the self at their center (2012:17).[34] And these early stories—as well as the memories they generate—necessarily entail a sense of cause and effect that may be *imposed* on the reception of events. As Turner shows, from very basic linguistic patterns to wholesale interpretations of events, the human mind turns things that happen (an event-story) into *acts* (action-stories) that necessarily must have agents and objects, which in turn can be understood as entailing responsibility and blame.

Turner's view of the nature of the human mind has implications for what happens to a traumatized mind (individually) or to a culture when narratives work against the interests of a group or class of people. The process of using story to model or understand one's relationship to the world, therefore, operates both for individuals and cultures. As I will discuss in Chapters 6 and 7 especially, *story* can function on a cultural level as *discourse* or ideology. When thinking of the impact of story from this perspective, we can also draw on the observations of sociologists and psychologists who emphasize the impact of group narratives on the formation of individual identity.[35] An important contribution of cognitive psychology from this perspective is the assertion that these larger cultural forces of narrative are embedded in the human brain. Our individual sense of self, assembled from a complex and shifting lattice of personal experiences and external messages, relies on a core well of memories and common processes of framing or narrating them. But this does not have a

purely positive valence. Because cultural narratives operate as discourse, they are the building blocks of our shared construction of reality. They communicate who we are in cultural frames that can perpetuate established roles and norms through the imposition of master narratives.[36]

Individual narratives, then, are often the product of a negotiation between cultural memory/narrative (or discourse) and personal experience. Modern approaches to identity and narrative tend to situate individuals and communities in their experiences over time and as recipients and shapers of cultural messages. Turner's descriptive approach developed at the same time that psychologists working in the tradition of theorists such as Jacques Lacan and Michel Foucault were re-thinking the way modern clinical treatments address mental health. Therapists who approach self-hood from a narrative perspective believe that human psychology is dynamic rather than static and fixed. Instead of suffering immutable and unchanging roles, we actually have the potential to "revise, re-collect and remember" who we are through the act of telling and re-telling our tales.[37] Learning to fit oneself in the world requires understanding that the ability to change it is dependent upon the stories we hear and tell about ourselves since they form and reinforce our sense of what is possible.[38]

If story is an engine of both culture and human thought, how do individuals and groups cope when a story threatens danger? What is the treatment for a mind infected with harmful stories? Victims of trauma often display trouble in the way they engage with narrative.[39] They fixate on details and become paralyzed by the replay of the same events, even as they need to replay and relive them constantly.[40] Under duress, the human mind will alter our memories and the way we narrate them to protect our sense of self; but sometimes experiences and even narratives are too problematic to assimilate or manage—the stories themselves become problematic, even traumatic. The stories we tell about the world can become, in a sense, pathological. One important approach for treating a dysfunction of narrative is in the questioning and the retelling of tales through which trauma victims learn to escape the destructive loops of past events, and resolve distortions in memory by focusing on and communicating their stories in different ways.[41]

As I will explore to a much greater extent in Chapters 2 and 3, one of my inspirations for thinking about the *Odyssey* as a therapeutic text comes from the clinical approach of narrative therapy in conjunction with a concept of "folk psychology," which I will discuss shortly. As Michael White (2007) and others have argued, there is a direct connection

between the internal function of narrative in a human mind and in a sense of agency that allows that particular human to operate in the world. This perspective emphasizes that many of the "maladaptations" of individual human identities derive in part from a harmful belief that our actions are specific manifestations of fundamental aspects of the self. Thus, Narrative Therapy sees individual identity as comprised of multi-tiered systems of personal and cultural discourses and employs, among others, a practice called "re-authoring conversations" to control old narratives and establish new ones to guide future action (Madigan 2010:36; Monk 1997:21–24).[42] White (2007) argues that narratives that limit our sense of agency or overly constrict our identities betray an "internal state psychology," which hinders our ability to adapt and change in the future because it roots our sense of what we can do by limiting our behavior to—often distorted—narratives of what we have done. In proposing that part of the purpose of therapy is to facilitate the recuperation of a sense of agency by re-imagining our relationship to our stories, White adapts Jerome Bruner's term "intentional state psychology" (1986:35–36) explaining that, "intentional state understandings shape people's endeavor to come to terms with the unexpected in life, provide a basis for their effort to address obstacles and crises, and make it possible for them to come to terms with a range of predicaments and dilemmas that confront them in everyday life" (2007:103).[43] As Mark Turner suggests in his analysis of narrative from a cognitive perspective, we use "character" as a shorthand to guide our predictions of what will happen in a story (1996:133–34).[44] Breaking with a constrictive character and embracing intentional state understanding frees individuals from the immutability of an internal identity and delivers a greater sense of agency and control over future outcomes.[45]

To combine the work of White and Turner: our brains chart courses of action through life that are dependent upon learned narratives. When these narratives are no longer applicable to current experiences, we (and our brains) cease to function normally. Since the problem is not necessarily chemical or measurably physical, the therapeutic intervention for a problem with stories can only be story itself. What is attractive about Narrative Therapy as an approach to storytelling is the way it acknowledges that if narrative has the power to create emotional and mental maladaptation then narrative is also the most effective treatment. In short, the therapeutic context aims to facilitate the patient's re-interpretation of the past in such a way that she redefines her sense of self, recuperates agency, and can plot a new course for the future.[46]

Such claims are not ill suited to the world of Archaic Greece where storytelling, poetry, and music are seen as possessing curative and transformative powers.[47] For example, Euripides calls "noble stories medicine for human fear" (λόγοι γὰϱ ἐσθλοὶ φάϱμαϰον φόβου βϱοτοῖς, frag. 1065).[48] In another fragment, Euripides more explicitly claims that "there are different medicines for different diseases: a kind [*eumenēs*] story [*muthos*] from friends for a man in grief ... ("... ἄλλ᾽ ἐπ᾽ ἄλλῃ φάϱμαϰον ϰεῖται νόσῳ· / λυπουμένῳ μὲν μῦθος εὐμενὴς φίλων, frag. 962).[49] Stobaeus attributes to Socrates the sentiment that "the sick need doctors; the misfortunate need encouragement from friends" (τοῖς μὲν νοσοῦσιν ἰατϱούς, τοῖς δ᾽ ἀτυχοῦσι φίλους δεῖ παϱαινεῖν, 4.48b 31). Indeed, we have multiple accounts from the ancient world of poetry and music being used therapeutically.[50] And later antiquity leaves us some fascinating evidence for the continuation of this theme: the cataloger of proverbs, Arsenius includes two proverbs, claiming that "only speech is medicine for grief" (λόγος μέν ἐστι φάϱμαϰον λύπης μόνος, 10.76b) and "speech is the doctor for suffering in the soul" (λόγος ἰατϱὸς τοῦ ϰατὰ ψυχὴν πάθους, 10.76c). The Byzantine encyclopedia, the *Suda*, even glosses the word *pharmakon* (often meaning "drug," whence our pharmacology and pharmacy) as "consolation and conversation, coming from *pherein* [to bear] and *akos* [cure/relief]" (παϱαμυθία, ὁμιλία, εἴϱηται δὲ ἀπὸ τοῦ φέϱειν τὴν ἄϰεσιν, s.v. *pharmakon*).[51] As a metaphor, the Greek concept of *pharmakon* turns out to be quite felicitous because the application of both language and drugs can have positive, negative, or merely postponing effects. The power of both bifurcates, and, like Apollo at the beginning of the *Iliad*, medicine can heal or bring death. But positive medicine may also have different outcomes: it can be curative (bringing relief to suffering by ending the malady) or merely *palliative*, assuaging the symptoms or numbing the subject without providing a cure. In recent years, both Simon Bennet and Konstantinos Arvanitakis have seen this therapeutic power in epic too, but with less emphasis than I will make on its negative potential.[52]

There are other ways to conceive of the relationship between ancient Greek thought and modern psychotherapy. For example, Christopher Gill suggests that recent work makes it "more plausible than before" to take ancient philosophical approaches to therapy "seriously as a mode of psychotherapy" (2018:279), focusing especially on cognitive and behavioral psychotherapy. Gill emphasizes that, in contrast with Freudian psychoanalysis, ancient therapeutic approaches and CBT (Cognitive Behavioral Therapy) emphasize "the steps that the person concerned can

take, as a conscious agent, to address his or her problem and bring about change" (280). Gill focuses especially on the process of Acceptance and Commitment Theory (ACT), a series of stages that emphasize the exploration and examination of conditions or behaviors that shape a person's state of mind and the interrelation between personal values, actions, and lived consequences.

This overview illustrates that it is *not* culturally inappropriate to attribute a belief in the therapeutic power of language to the ancient Greeks. Indeed, the power of narrative to harm or to help is, as I noted earlier, also an essential epic theme. Mark Turner (1996), moreover, uses the beginning of the *Odyssey* to show how the experience of the Trojan War is mapped from a spatial event story to an action-story. Although his presentation could be expanded considerably, he sees in this moment a "parable" that "intricately projects a story of physical manipulation onto the story of a journey." Turner's argument, furthermore, is that this projection and essential reinterpretation of events is not merely literary but is, instead, the type of thinking that occurs in the "everyday mind" (27). Stories that explain causality do not then reflect any scientific fact, but instead communicate an interpretation of events as actions, an interpretation conditioned by individual experience and cultural norms (narratives). Thinkers (and storytellers) assimilate observed events to narrative expectations.[53] But they can also act as correctives or respondents to different ways of viewing action-story. We can imagine an audience contemplating the tale of Aigisthos and blaming his father's (and forefathers') actions for sealing his fate and struggling against notions of determinism and divine authority. Indeed, the proem to the *Odyssey* sets up this interpretive tension from the beginning when it portrays Odysseus as a wanderer who loses his men thanks to *their* recklessness *and* Helios' resulting anger.

I believe that the *Odyssey* both dramatizes the effects of contemplating and addressing issues of agency and narrative and also prompts a different kind of therapeutic context with its audiences. Where Mark Turner extends the complexity of what we now understand as literary to the generalized working of "the everyday mind," Jerome Bruner (1986) locates in narrative what he calls "folk psychology." For Bruner, stories in the form of direct narrative, memories, or cultural discourse are a reinterpretation of the world, creating in the mind of a reader an interpretation of the world that is at once neither the empirical world nor the story, but instead something similar to what Wolfgang Iser calls a "virtual text" (1974:6). In an important way, this creation of a third world

between story and text not only echoes reader-reception theory (such as Iser's and even more sophisticated articulations like Barthes' [1989], where the recipient of a narrative becomes its writer), but it also overlaps with Turner's cognitive notion of a "creative blend," where a story (his parable) is projected upon a target but both sources (parable and target) reflect back on one another in the human mind to create a narrative with elements from both (1986:57–84). For Bruner, again, the process that yields a new narrative in the mind of the reader is also operative on a larger cultural level in the generation of folk theories about the nature of the world and man's place in it. Bruner writes (1986:49):

> And folk narrative of this kind has as much claim to 'reality' as any theory we may construct in psychology by the use of our most astringent scientific methods. Indeed, many thoughtful students of psychology believe that one of the richest sources of data for the construction of an adequate psychology are these very folk theories ... . Such a psychology would, of course, be more interpretive than positivist, its task being to provide a richer, yet more abstract interpretation of human "theories in action," much as the interpretive cultural anthropologist provides an *explication de texte* of the culture.

So, for Bruner, cultural narratives necessarily contain the frameworks of a folk psychology—a term he does not apply as a synonym for primitive or unscientific, let alone fictive. Instead, a folk psychology is somewhat more indirect, metaphorical and resistant to positivistic simplification.

Other approaches offer similar insights on the central impact cultural discourse can have on individuals, including those that draw on psychoanalysis starting with Freud and Althusser and also integrating Marxist literary and social theory (e.g., Barthes and Bourdieu), moving through Foucault and frameworks from sociology and communication. Many of these are mutually dependent, however, and support some of my general aims with different terminology and foci. While I have been influenced over time by these disciplines, I have focused on a handful of frameworks that emphasize the cognitive functioning of the human mind and its reflections and responses in literature. The formulations offered by Turner and Bruner and others make it possible not just to see the *Odyssey* as describing and even debating human psychology but, more importantly, they show how the reception and production of narrative itself is part of this debate. The aspect of production, moreover, also helps support and characterize the therapeutic potential of epic. Rather than merely being descriptive of the human condition, the *Odyssey* is *active* in

displaying narrative's impact on human life and prompting responses in its audiences. The *Odyssey*, I suggest, evinces and develops a sense of the modern concept of the "narrative self," that identity constructed through and within our memory and communicated through stories we tell.[54]

D. Singular to Collective

By and large, the model of the human mind I have discussed so far has been about an individual mind developing, relating to, and responding to the world (with the exception of the discussion of folk psychology). Narrative does function on the level of the individual but relies on *external input*, thrives through discussion and repetition, and capitalizes in part on the human capacity to attribute motivations, emotions, and experiences to others. The collective and distributed nature of narrative generation and reception is important not only for understanding the larger cultural function of narrative, but is also critical to apprehending the psychological depth and power of the Homeric epics. From the philosophical perspective of theory of mind, we use "mind-reading" to ascribe to someone else "a certain mental state on the basis of her observable action" (Zunshine 2006:6). Cognitive scientists have argued that this is an ability that developed during our evolution—it makes "literature as we know it possible."[55] Modern cognitive approaches to literature, narrative, and education help demonstrate that the collective experience of narrative is connected to the development of individuals and cultures (providing confirmations for similar ideas from sociology and related fields). The theory of intersubjectivity (see Zlatev et al. 2008) implies that, rather than predicting behavior in others, we absorb a series of patterns based on narratives and social roles.[56] The theory of extended mind, too, helps us to understand how complex mental functions may rely in part on our environment and engagement with others (see Clark and Chalmers 1998). Indeed, some theorists now argue that to understand the human mind fully, we need to appreciate the ways in which it relies on and changes with the emotions and cognitions of others.[57] Storytelling and its audiences work together and exhibit what Alan Palmer (2010) calls "intermental thought" a type of "extended cognition or intersubjectivity" that characterizes the dynamic relationship between external and internal functions of minds (39–41). As David Hutto (2008) argues, folk psychology is a type of narrative engagement, the process whereby children develop the ability to attribute mental states to others by hearing

and telling stories.

That a public performance of narrative is potentially therapeutic is not a strange suggestion to students of the Classics or literature in general.[58] Indeed, Aristotle famously sees the chief power of the performance of tragedy in therapeutic terms. When in the *Poetics* Aristotle prizes most the narrative that succeeds in provoking an emotional reaction and the cleansing power of pity and fear through identification with the actions and the characters, he emphasizes features that would not seem strange to a modern theorist working on narrative.[59] Plays need to have plots with clear causal connections; they need to be believable; they prompt the audience to identify in some meaningful way; and the collective experience of the narrative augments its force. Aristotle's catharsis is therapeutic from a narrative perspective—scholars like Martha Nussbaum have argued that catharsis is both emotional and intellectual: that the experience of identifying with a mimetic narrative forces the audience into a "clarification concerning who we are" (1986:391).

The point of this brief survey is that literary minds are also social minds; and the interdependence between the two is critical to the development and performance of Homeric epic. So, the final argument about Homeric psychology that I would like to clarify is that Homeric epic works in part as a type of *cultural* narrative therapy. In this, I again join both Jonathan Shay (2002), who sees the *Odyssey* as reflecting a warrior's experience of trauma and reintegration, and also Charles Underwood (2018), who has recently viewed the epic as an exploration of self-assertion and recovery. From a diachronic perspective, we already recognize that Homeric language, which conveys themes, story patterns, and deep aspects of cultural discourse, is an amalgam language that develops in a marked environment for a marked use.[60] This particular language evolved as it did in part because of the co-participation of audiences and performers. Such an environment represents a petri dish of culture. Thus from a similar perspective, the epics may preserve the (putative) imprint of various layers of discourse, belief, and ideology. Even though we know little about the synchronic experience of the epics—that is, a single performance—we can infer from what evidence we have a few important features.[61] First, audience members were likely very familiar with the characters and events of epic because they appeared in other popular genres, visual representations, and ritual contexts. Second, ancient audiences likely experienced performance of the epics in episodic form throughout their lifetimes (i.e., they were participants in performances of parts of the epics in different contexts). Third, ancient

audiences experienced performances together and reflected upon them in conversation (applying examples from them proverbially to the lives they lived; this happens frequently in Plato's dialogues, for example). Fourth, when audiences did experience performances of the entire epic, their contexts would have been communal and momentous. I take the trouble to enumerate my assumptions about audience experience because they attest to two cultural features that I believe increased the psychological effect of Homeric epic. Audience members spent most of their lives with its narratives in (and around) their heads; they shared this experience collectively.

I suspect that, in addition to facilitating a marked language and a shared culture, the repeated and communal experience of the Homeric poems not only facilitated their function as cultural narratives but actually sharpened and augmented their potential to respond to and be shaped by the folk psychology of their cultural milieux. Indeed, some Homerists have anticipated the deep connection between epic and psychology. In a seminal article, Russo and Simon (1968) argued that "Homeric psychology, or view of mental life, is most likely to have its roots in the very nature of Greek traditional epic poetry as it developed in its formative period in the centuries before Homer" (490) and that "the recitation sets up a kind of common 'field' in which poet, audience, and the characters within the poems are all defined, with some blurring of the boundaries that normally separate the three" (492).

Russo's and Simon's language and the phenomenon they discuss resonate with Turner's formulation of conceptual blending mentioned earlier and, by locating this process in the performance and reception contexts of Homeric poetry, may also indicate its source and potency. Although it is no longer necessary to begin a book about Homer by staking out territory in a fraught battlefield over what the term 'Homer' means (i.e., poet vs. tradition vs. metonym), it is both useful and important in light of the foregoing studies to admit my basic assumptions. These assumptions help to illustrate how an epic like the *Odyssey* developed such psychological depth and how they reinforce and amplify the therapeutic possibilities common to narrative in general as well as literature. For one, I accept the basic notion that the Homeric epics are cultural narratives that developed over a period of time in a dynamic performance context sensitive to audience interests.[62] Regardless of how the epics were textualized and transmitted after they were separated from this dynamic process—and whether or not their final form came thanks to the agency of a single singer or poet—the process of oral performance (and

composition), as well as the expectations conditioned by such a context, constitutes the most important truth about the poems' characters.[63] They are cultural products, created by their time and place and reflective of a multitude of creative minds and creative receptions.[64] Nevertheless, since all we have is a text that is more or less fixed, the multiplicity available to us comes in the form of interpretation or re-creation in the blended space between the poem we find on the page and the responses in our separate minds.

A third and no less significant aspect of the epics' character is their Panhellenic nature.[65] Although there is some debate about what exactly the term means, it is clear that the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* transcended local boundaries of identity and heritage to become vehicles for the development of a larger Greek cultural identity. In this, the capacious and at times ambiguous nature of Homeric language and themes embrace sometimes divergent local outlooks and disparate networks. By reflecting not just the multiplicity of audiences over time in one place but also those in different city states with their separate traditions, Homeric epic can evince a type of universalism that is readily given to evoking experiences and perspectives common to many, but specific to none. Of course, beneath that rather simplistic articulation, the epic contains themes and ideas in competition with one another. Such a narrative is not only deeply psychological, but it can also be intensely personal in evoking and sustaining audience response.[66]

In emphasizing the resonance between epic and psychology (therapeutic, cognitive, and theoretical), I aim both to contribute to arguments for the sophistication of Homeric epic (as a genre and a discourse) and to propose a therapeutic function for the performance genre itself. Studies in oral poetry and performance have, indeed, long highlighted the interdependence of singer and audience and the manifold ways that the context and the story communicate and reinforce cultural values. And again, modern cognitive theories recognize this cultural function of oral poetry in our shared stories generally. Stories provide a community with common frames of reference, as well as shared schemes for organizing and communicating knowledge—as Bruner explains, "For stories define the range of canonical characters, the settings in which they operate, the actions that are permissible and comprehensible. And thereby they provide, so to speak, a map of possible roles and of possible worlds in which action, thought, and self-definition are permissible (or desirable)" (1986:66).

Epic poetry, however, is not just about the expression or inculcation

of culturally normative ways of thinking and being. Instead, it is dialogic, allowing for the presentation and contestation of different ideas.[67] The folk psychology communicated is, thus, not a one-way street, but it is a type of interpretive talk-therapy. In addressing issues such as agency or, as I will discuss in the next chapter, its converse "learned helplessness," the *Odyssey* displays complex understandings of the human mind while also acknowledging defeatist patterns of thought. And, importantly, such acknowledgment is accompanied by embedded ameliorative—or what I call therapeutic—responses. Some possible responses to psychological problems are described within the text, as when Zeus initiates the narrative by asking us to think differently about human responsibility or, more intricately, as when Odysseus must tell stories about himself as a first step in recreating his identity.[68] But others are enacted through the performance and reception of the poem itself—and this is the force of the epic's dialogism. But, this is not always a positive story. Above, I make the distinction between palliative and curative care: some of the strategies provided by epic may merely function to provide temporary relief, while others are transformative. Another outcome exists in addition to positive transformation and temporary relief: epic 'treatment' may, in fact, be harmful for some audiences, as I explore in the representation of slaves and women in Chapters 6 and 7.

The theories and attendant arguments I have provided in this chapter amount to an overlapping latticework of support for the way that I want to read the Homeric epics. I realize in the writing of this book that some may find the application of these approaches lacking rigor. One important counter-argument is that mindsets and perspectives, which are sometimes viewed as psychological, may be instead reflexes of cultural difference.[69] Agency and a sense of self may be particularly influenced by cultural notions of dominance and submission. As a cross-cultural fMRI (functional magnetic resonance imaging) study of mental function has demonstrated, American and Japanese individuals, for example, have different neurological responses to dominant and submissive figures (Americans responding positively to the former; Japanese to the latter).[70] In addition to running the considerable risk of assuming similar currents for cultural discourse from one group to another, I also face the accusation of anachronism in talking about features of an ancient period in terms at home in modernity.

While it is certainly true that many aspects of psychological diagnoses are culturally constituted and, moreover, it risks severe anachronism to read ancient Greek audiences and persons as we would ourselves, from

modern perspectives on the human mind, it nevertheless seems misguided to imagine that the foundational workings of the human mind were so different at any point as to forbid such investigations. At the very least, the study functions as an exploration of how much can be said if we posit some essential similarities across time and culture. When it comes to issues like trauma, for example, I am sensitive to the criticism that what is seen as traumatic in one culture is not necessarily so in another. But this statement applies as truthfully to differences among individuals in our own time. I have gone to the lengths I have in this chapter to show many different kinds of support from varying disciplines for two reasons. First, I believe the range and variety of support strengthens the foundational claims of my argument that similar contentions are made so broadly. Second, such an overlapping network of different disciplines is indirectly illustrative of the *Odyssey*'s own intellectual and emotional range and its reflection of the manifold nature of the human mind.

And, yet, the theoretical support remains an outline and not a clearly established foundation. The following chapters, rather than proving the contentions I have made so far, function to illustrate the interpretive profit of entertaining them. Some of the arguments might resonate more strongly than others; and it is certainly likely that not all readers will respond the same. In part, I think that this is due to the source text as well: the *Odyssey*, like its protagonist and like the human mind, is rarely the same thing to different people.

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1 Meineck 2017; and cf. Shay 1996 and 2002.

2 For a list of the episodes relating to Agamemnon and Orestes, see de Jong 2001:12–14; cf. Marks 2008:17–35; Olson 1995:24–42; and Alden 2017:77–100.

3 As a start to action, see Heubeck 1988:77; for the importance of the warning to Aigisthos as a paradigm for the *Odyssey*'s characters, see Rüter 1969:64–66; cf. Jaeger 1926:69–85. See Cook 1995:32–33.

4 *Odyssey* 1.6–9. Pucci 1998:19–20, notes that the proem anticipates Zeus's comments. See also Danek 1998:41–42; Steinruck 2008:70–71. For Zeus's comments as directed toward the audience of the poem, see Barker 2009:128–30. For the juridical sense of these comments in contrast with the *Iliad*, see Nagy 1990:241-242.

5 For an overview of the *atasthalia* theme, see Cook 1995: passim; Bakker 2013:96–119; cf. Friedrich 1987a, 1987b:375–400, and 1991:16–28. See Alden 2017: Table 4. Finkelberg 1995:15–28, frames Zeus's view as more advanced moral thought; see also Gill 1996:46n. 59; cf. Russo and Simon 1968:488–95.

6 As Olson puts it, "The *Odyssey* is thus above all else a story of the troubles human beings bring upon themselves..." (1995:214). The proem does seem to overlook certain details. For an overview of some and for the loss of the suitors and the absence of any comment by the proem about the trouble Odysseus has with his people, see Nagler 1990:336–38.

7 To be fair, it seems typical of the Byzantine period to ascribe affection to "Homer" for his protagonists: Eustathius calls Homer an "Achilles-lover" (Ὅτι δὲ φιλοαχιλλεὺς ὁ ποιητής, *Comm. ad Il.* 1.14) and an Odysseus lover (*Comm. ad. Od.* 2.220.30).

8 For a blameless Odysseus, see Clay 1983:35–37; for shared responsibility, see Louden 2011:228; cf. Shay 2002. For a recent treatment that comes down against Odysseus and his flaws, see Ahrensdorf 2014:202–17.

9 For overviews of the treatment of justice, see Rose 2012:147–51; Bakker 2013:132–34; for apparent differences in justice between the Homeric epics, see the discussion in Allan 2006:1–35; for the theological dimension, see the recent work of Ahrensdorf 2014.

10 For Zeus's lines as programmatic, see Adkins 1960:19–20, for whom this speech is a solution to "the problem of evil"; Dietrich 1965:216; Griffin1980; Kullmann 1985:14; Burkert 1997:262; Segal 1994:195–210; Kearns 2004:67–69; and Marks, 2008:22–23. *Contra*: Van der Valk 1949:243; Clay 1983. Barker 2009:128–29, emphasizes that this reflection is meant as authoritative for the external audience. Cook argues that Zeus "tacitly assumes a causal link between human suffering and crime" (1995:34). For the epic's more "developed understanding of human autonomy," see Gill 1996:46n59; cf. Russo 2012:18–25.

11 Olson 1995:205; Miller 2009:36–39. John Peradotto has also explored connections between this invitation to meditation and the *form* of epic narrative, in drawing a distinction between motivation ("the domination of convention and tradition restricting the way a story may go"; e.g., gods make it happen) and function ("the internal play transcending or at least circumventing conventionally understood 'reality'" (1990:44–45).

12 Cf. the seminal discussion of Lesky 2004:170–202.

13 Psychologists like Michael White (2007:103) emphasize the power of a sense of agency in allowing someone to operate successfully in the world; see especially chapters 2 and 3.

14 I do not treat the gods as extensions of internal psychological states. Rather, I consider them representative of different perspectives on the relationship between the individual and the rest of the world. For the gods as evidence of internal human psychology, see Dodds 1951:14; Snell 1960:18–22; for arguments against, see Austin 1975:82–86; Clay 1983:136–38.

15 Minchin (2001:35) writes about the importance of narratives for cognitive scientists in exploring causal relationships. Just because a narrator expresses one causal relationship that does not mean that the audience will respond with the same interpretation of events.

16 For free will in Homer, see overviews in Williams 1993; Gill 1996:29–92; and Hammer 2002:49–79. The classic treatments include Snell 1960, and Adkins 1960; contra: Lesky 2004. For divisions of thought, emotion, and soul based on lexical distinctions, see Snell 1960; Sullivan 1988; Zielínski 2002 [1922]:14–15, with the discussion of Zaborowski: 291–300.

17 For the evolutionary view of Greek psychology, positing that Homer represents an earlier or primitive understanding of Human psychology, see Snell 1960; Fränkel 1962, 89; Dodds 1951; Gaskin 1990.

18 For cognitive approaches, see Minchin 2001 and 2007 and the recent collection of essays in Antovic and Cánovas 2016. See most recently Privitera 2018 (with a bibliography on 33n.2). For the *Odyssey* as evoking "overlapping cognitive systems," see Underwood 2018:xv.

19 See Russo and Simon 1968 and Russo 2012.

20 I focus on aspects of narrative, but there are parallel perspectives on the reinforcing and productive substance of collective meaning-making. For cognitive metaphors, see the classic work of Lakoff and Johnson 2006. Visual art offers a complementary perspective—see, for example, Agamben's (2013) adaptation of Aby Warburg's theory of the *Pathosformeln* (see Johnson 2012) to the socio-cultural figure of the nymph.

21 Cf. Arvanitakis 2015:18: "In any event, Homer was not interested in the psychology of the individual, but in universal principles that shape and express human reality."

22 Privitera argues that "Homeric representations of the mind constitute a "phenomenology of experience" that the narrative develops throughout his poems; that is, a reconstruction of the psychological workings of his characters that draws on the physical, material, perceptual, interactional, and evolutionary via conceptual metaphor" (2018:33). For the demands the poems put on their audiences, see Doherty 1995 and Buchan 2004.

23 See also the work of the psychoanalyst Konstantinos Arvanitakis (2015), who surveys the meanings of the Homeric epics from a post-Freudian psychoanalytic perspective.

24 For an overview of post-traumatic stress disorder from a soldier's personal experience, see Morris 2015. For a prolonged psycholanalytic reading of the *Odyssey* as a rumination on desire (drawing on Freud and Lacan), see Buchan 2004.

25 Cf. Underwood 2018:7: "Homeric cognition is a visceral yet discursively integrative navigational act of fixing one's strategic position in relation to the world and to others in that world, and anticipating the path one needs to take to arrive in the circumstance where one hopes to be ... .The discursive nature of human cognition in the *Odyssey* makes it open to observation and interpretation as a sociocultural phenomenon."

26 For the therapeutic use of *Ajax* and *Philoctetes* with veterans and communities, see Bryan Doerries' Theater of War Project: https://theaterofwar.com/about. There are several projects that have taken Homeric poetry and other classical texts into prison populations, see https://classicalstudies.org/annual-meeting/149/abstract/reading-homer-and-outside-bars-educational-project-post-conflict. Consider as well widely reported instances like the performance of *Antigone* by Syrian refugees in 2009; cf. Meineck 2010.

27 Bruner 1986:9: "Psychoanalysts, following the earlier lead of George Klein, began inquiring whether the object of inquiry was not so much archaeologically to reconstruct life as it was to help the patient construct a more contradiction-free and generative narrative of it."

28 Consider, as well, the sociological frameworks developed by Émile Durkheim, especially essential concepts of "collective consciousness" (1893).

29 See González 2015: passim, for the most extensive overview of the performance history of the Homeric epics. Cf. Nagy 1996 and Scodel 2002 for more on the audience's perspective.

30 See Stewart 1976:146–95 for an extensive treatment of the epic's interest in poetic creation; cf. Pucci 1987:209–13; Segal 1994:113–41; Saïd 2011:125–32.

31 See Le Hunte and Golembiewski 2014:73; Rubin 2006.

32 See, for example, Gottschall 2012:60–67 on "mirror neurons" and our sympathetic embrace of narrative.

33 See Gottschall 2012:96–103; based on the groundbreaking work of Gazzaniga and Ledoux 1978; cf. Gazzaniga 2012 and LeDoux 2015. See also Parry and Doan 1994:23.

34 For questions about the evolutionary development of the human capacity for narrative, see

Gottschall 2012:26–31. Churchland (2013:204–5) argues against the proposal (e.g., Dennett 1995) that language makes consciousness possible; cf. Panksepp 2010.

35 See n. 25 above on Durkheim and the collective consciousness; but consider, as well, the approach of Louis Althusser (1971) who emphasizes the process of interpellation, by which the individual subject is created through the influence of the overlapping and competing ideologies of social and political conventions. Althusser has had a strong impact on the post-modern theorists who shaped the clinical psychological perspectives that inform many of the studies in this book.

36 On narrative and social constructions, see the classic Berger and Luckmann 1966; for master narratives, see Lyotard 1979; for a recent evaluation of cultural narratives in oppression, see Goodman 2015.

37 See Drewery and Winslade 1997:38; Epston and White 1992:30–33, for the "multistoried nature" of human life and how people retell narratives to create a personal "text" that can be both constructive and destructive.

38 For how the stories we tell both "restrain and liberate our lives," see Madigan 2010:29–30; cf. Drewery and Winslade 1997:33–34. For the cognitive perspective, see Gottschall 2012:60–67.

39 See Conway 2005 for the memory forces of correspondence and coherence, as well as Chapter 5 below.

40 See Fernyhough 2012:181–85.

41 Fernyhough 2012:199: therapy for trauma is about re-integrating the parts of the memory into a coherent whole; cf. Madigan 2010:65.

42 For the various influences on practitioners of narrative therapy, including cybernetics theory, postmodernism, and the work of Michael White, see Freedman and Coombs 1996:6–18; cf. Parry and Doan 1994:1–11. For re-authoring conversations, see Madigan 2010:81.

43 See White 2007:103–6.

44 In turn, the reflection of the story back onto a lived life can cause trouble when one cannot "locate one's own focus, viewpoint, role, and character with respect to conventional stories" (134). Such a mismatch between conventional narrative and the life lived "is thought to be pathological and deeply distressing" (134).

45 For Hutto 2008, folk psychology is a "distinctive kind of narrative practice;" see Palmer 2010:22 for the overlapping of "theory of mind," "folk psychology," and "intersubjectivity." See below for intersubjectivity and collective narrative experience.

46 For the goal of narrative therapy in finding "more satisfying interpretations by bringing forth stories that are more congruent with the lives they intend to live," see Parry and Doan 1994:30; cf. Drewery and Winslade 1997:36–43. For how externalizing problems contributes to the development of a "sense of responsibility, rather than diminish[ing] it," see White 2011:118–20.

47 See, for example, Walsh 1984; Clay 1994. See the overview in Bennett 1978, as well.

48 Elliptically, Euripides echoes this in the *Alcestis* where he writes, "... / even though I have tried most words / I have found nothing stronger than Necessity not any medicine at all "(962–66). πλείστων ἀψάμενος λόγων ϰρεῖσσον οὐδὲν Ἀνάγϰας εὗρον, οὐδέ τι φάρμαϰον.

49 Menander echoes this in frag. 591: "The man who is sick in the body needs a doctor;

someone who is sick in the mind needs a friend / For a well-meaning friend knows how to treat grief" (τῷ μὲν τὸ σῶμα † διατεθειμένῳ ϰαϰῶς / χρεία 'στ' ἰατροῦ, τῷ δὲ τὴν ψυχὴν φίλου· / λύπην γὰρ εὔνους οἶδε θεραπεύειν φίλος).

50 See Porphyry, *Life of Pythagoras*, 30. Cf. Iamblichus, *Life of Pythagoras*, 111–12; Apollonius Paradoxographus, *Historiae Mirabiles*, 49. For the power of speech to shape the mind or heal it, see Gorgias, *Helen*, 13–14.

51 This definition and etymology likely derive from the earlier *Etymologicum Magnum*: "Medicine, Persuasion, Companionship: Medicine [*pharmakon*] is from bringing [*pherein*] a cure [*akos*] something which is brought as a cure [*pherakon*]" Φάρμακον: Παραμυθία, ὁμιλία· παρὰ τὸ φέρειν τὸ ἄκος, φέρακόν τι ὄν. The etymology is not taken seriously by modern lexicographers: see Chantraine s.v *pharmakon*, which after surveying various approaches to its etymology (mostly reflexes of *pherō* and PIE *bher-) concludes "la question de l'origine de *pharmakon* est insoluble en l' état present de nos connaissances."

52 Bennet 1978:47: "Homer was not a therapist, yet in some significant way the Greeks saw poetry as a form of therapy. Plato spoke of 'healing the psyche' largely as a metaphor borrowed from medicine"; cf. 78–88 on the therapeutic impact of epic; and see Arvanitakis 2015:27–28.

53 See Minchin 2001:12–13 for "schemas" as a means of anchoring personal experience to a story framework.

54 LeDoux 2002:20; cf. Dennett 1991; Neisser and Fivush 1994.

55 To be fair, Zunshine (2006:8) believes that written narratives that emerge with print culture create conditions that encourage more "theory of mind intense" fictional narratives. But this does not have to be all strictly literary to the exclusion of oral cultures.

56 Cf. Palmer 2010:20–23 for an overview of many of these theories.

57 For a succinct articulation extended mind theory, see Clark and Chalmers 1998; cf. the longer exploration in Logan 2007. For intermental thought and the importance of social minds for fiction, see Palmer 2010:4–45.

58 See Underwood 2018:1–2 for myth as "culturally persuasive speech" and the *Odyssey* as a "discursive act."

59 For a recent overview of the place of the *Poetics* in literary history, see Ford 2015, especially 15–16 where he discusses the emotional effects of poetry.

60 For a recent survey of bibliography on Homeric language, see Barker and Christensen 2019, 10–27 cf. Bakker 2005.

61 For issues of Homeric performance, see Nagy 1996 and 2002; Collins 2004 (especially part 3 and chapter 19 on the Panathenaia); Scodel 2002, esp. chapter 7; Frame 2009:551–620 for the poems at the Panionian Festival; González 2015; and see Lord 1960, part 1, for audience and singer.

62 See Foley 2002 for epic as a cultural phenomenon.

63 For an evolutionary model of the development of the Homeric text, see Nagy 2004. For recent comments on the dictation model and discussion of its implications, see Ready 2015 for an extended overview.

64 See Lord 1991, who makes community of singers and audiences equivalent to the tradition.

65 For the synthesis of local traditions into a "unified Panhellenic model that suits most city-states but corresponds exactly to none," see Nagy 1999 [1979]:7; cf. Rutherford 2005:11. cf. Ross 2005:301–7 for "Proto-Panhellenism" in the *Iliad*. For Panhellenism in general, see Mitchell 2007. For the force of Panhellenism in influencing the shape and influence of the Homeric epics, see Barker and Christensen 2019.

66 See Underwood 2018, passim for the *Odyssey* as a "cultural text."

67 On the dialogic nature of epic, see Peradotto 1990:53 and 62–63; Heiden 1991:5; for the term, see Bakhtin 1986:170; cf. Scully 1986:135; Thalmann 1988:14–21; Bakker 1997:21–25; and Barker 2009:19–20. For analogical cross-currents in ideology in Homer, see Rose 1997; and Thalmann 1988:3–5. For the *Odyssey*, see Rose 2012:142–65; cf. Dougherty 2001, and Saïd 2011, 354–72. For performer and audience as engaged in a Bakhtinian dialogue, cf. Underwood 2018:xiii–xiv.

68 This theme is anticipated well by Cook 1995.

69 Since psychology as an academic discipline largely developed in the West, its presuppositions about human universals are often skewed; see Smith et al. 2013 for an overview.

70 See Kim and Sasaki 2014.

2

Treating Telemachus, Education, and Learned Helplessness

πῆρά τοι μαθήσιος ἀρχά

Trying is the first step of learning

Alcman, frag. 125

As mentioned in the introduction, the *Odyssey* delays naming its protagonist and then postpones showing him until Book 5. In the meantime, the audience must contemplate instead Odysseus's son, Telemachus. The so-called *Telemachy*—the books that tell his story—often challenges modern audience attention by the very fact that it delays the appearance of its eponymous hero. In addition, with its repetition of many themes and motifs in Books 3 and 4 (where Telemachus visits Pylos and Sparta successively) the narrative may seem stretched beyond reasonable limits. (Ancient sources report that versions of this tale could have gone on longer: in some variants, Athena mentions sending Telemachus to Crete too!)[1] Structurally and thematically, Telemachus's stories anticipate the contents of his father's narrative.[2] Such expansion may also function to produce impatience and yearning for Odysseus in audiences. Nevertheless, the *Telemachy* also makes psychological revelations that are essential to the unfolding of the whole. So, this anticipation is more than mere foreshadowing: the *Telemachy* shows a character who is physically and mentally marginalized and deprived of agency returning to (or attaining) life and claiming agency through action and story. Reading the *Telemachy* closely, then, affords us a deeper understanding of Homeric psychology while also preparing us to see Odysseus in a different way.[3]

This chapter offers a few different ways of understanding Telemachus's mental and emotional states and the transformation he undergoes as he

moves from Ithaca through Pylos to Sparta. In the chapter's second part, I will compare this marginalized state to the modern theory of Learned Helplessness and argue that the epic depicts Telemachus as proceeding through a system of action to treat it. These are two structural and thematic elements that will be foundational to a discussion of Odysseus as well in the next chapter. But while father and son exhibit similar symptoms, their etiologies differ. So I will start by looking at Telemachus's depiction at the beginning of the epic, where he starts out like his father in a state of inaction, and by considering what it is that ails him. I suggest that the epic frames him as suffering from a deficient community, which has deprived him of a proper learning environment from the perspective of ancient Greek culture and modern cognitive psychology. The limited nature of his learning experiences has marginalized him by stunting his development as both a learner and a doer. This explanation, in addition, has the benefit of helping to motivate Athena's steps in mentoring him (as something of a teacher) and his traveling to hear and use stories.

A. Telemachus, Alone

When Athena first arrives in Ithaca for the purpose of "encouraging Telemachus and putting *menos* in his heart" (μᾶλλον ἐποτρύνω καί οἱ μένος ἐν φρεσὶ θείω, 1.89), she has already laid out the narrative plan for the epic's first segment: Telemachus will call the suitors to assembly and then go to Sparta and Pylos to inquire about his father and receive his own fame among men (1.90–95). The narrator's impulse to anticipate the plot clearly motivates both Athena's statement and her subsequent actions. The resulting content helps to delay the appearance of Odysseus, characterize the state of Ithaca in his absence, and provide both thematic and structural foreshadowing for the hero's return. But the broader cultural and psychological resonance of Telemachus's narrative requires closer examination.

When Athena arrives on the Ithacan scene, her gaze falls upon the suitors who delight themselves in games, wine, and dining (1.110–12). It is Telemachus who sees her first (1.113–20):

> τὴν δὲ πολὺ πρῶτος ἴδε Τηλέμαχος θεοειδής·
> ἧστο γὰρ ἐν μνηστῆρσι φίλον τετιημένος ἦτορ,
> ὀσσόμενος πατέρ' ἐσθλὸν ἐνὶ φρεσίν, εἴ ποθεν ἐλθὼν

μνηστήρων τῶν μὲν σκέδασιν κατὰ δώματα θείη,
τιμὴν δ' αὐτὸς ἔχοι καὶ κτήμασιν οἷσιν ἀνάσσοι.
τὰ φρονέων μνηστῆρσι μεθήμενος εἴσιδ' Ἀθήνην,
βῆ δ' ἰθὺς προθύροιο, νεμεσσήθη δ' ἐνὶ θυμῷ
ξεῖνον δηθὰ θύρῃσιν ἐφεστάμεν·

"God-like Telemachus saw her first by far.
For he was sitting among the suitors, pained in his dear heart,
Dreaming about his noble father in his mind, if he should come home
From somewhere and scatter the suitors throughout his home,
And get honor for himself and rule over his possessions.
As he sat imagining these things, he saw Athena,
And went straight to the entryway, feeling indignant
That a guest should stand in the doorway for so long ..."

This new stranger rouses Telemachus from his reverie; and the characterization of his repose intrigues me. Telemachus does not appear able to act except in the offering of hospitality. His emotional state is withdrawn: he inhabits his own thoughts, he is emotionally distressed, and he fantasizes about things being different from what they are. The Greek emphasizes his internal activity—he is emotionally "pained" (τετιημένος), he hopes for his father (ὀσσόμενος), and he contemplates the fantasy of someone else righting his household's wrongs (τὰ φρονέων).[4] His subsequent response remains an internalized act, as he feels shame (νεμεσσήθη δ' ἐνὶ θυμῷ) for failing to live up to the very standard of hospitality that has been offered to the suitors, the abuse of which is a source of his frustration.

The subsequent actions of the *Telemachy* have been described as tutelage, initiation, and the like, quite rightly.[5] But I believe that circumstances that put Telemachus in a position to require such aid—including his lack of education and his emotional state—may be usefully framed from modern perspectives on education to help us better understand both the need for Athena's intervention and its character. My initial suggestion is that Telemachus is depicted in a state of paralysis akin to a conflict in the fight-or-flight response.[6] In addition to general signals of Telemachus's frustration—even depression or parafunctional anxiety—and his inability to act, the narrator characterizes him with a phrase that is repeated in very specific circumstances. Here, again, is his first appearance (1.113–15):

τὴν δὲ πολὺ πρῶτος ἴδε Τηλέμαχος θεοειδής·
ἦστο γὰρ ἐν μνηστῆρσι φίλον τετιημένος ἦτορ,
ὀσσόμενος πατέρ' ἐσθλὸν ἐνὶ φρεσίν ...

God-like Telemachus saw her much the first
For he was sitting among the suitors, *pained in his dear heart*,
Dreaming about his noble father in his thoughts ...

Greek epic, because it developed in an oral-formulaic context, can convey meaning and characterize with an economy not always available to literate authors. Often, the placement of a word or group of words (a formula) conveys more meaning than a modern reader might expect because it has traditional associations from repeated use in specific contexts. This means that audience members would be responsive to connotative meaning even in single words or short phrases from their experience of hearing the same type of phrase used elsewhere multiple times.[7] Here, in the brief depiction of Telemachus, one of these phrases—φίλον τετιημένος ἦτορ—relies on just this kind of a system of associations. Although the phrase "pained in heart" (τετιημένος ἦτορ) does not have broad representation in the extant epic tradition, it nevertheless has a rather marked one that indicates an emotional response to forced action or unwilling inaction. For instance, in the *Iliad* Ajax has to retreat from the Achaeans unwillingly (ὣς Αἴας τότ' ἀπὸ Τρώων τετιημένος ἦτορ / ἤϊε πόλλ' ἀέκων, 11.556–57). In the *Odyssey*, Odysseus describes himself with the same formula when mentioning the night he spent sleeping alone in the bushes on the shore of Skheria (7.287). The conceptual union between these two instances is that both Ajax and Odysseus are compelled to action by external forces. Later on in the *Odyssey*, the narrator describes Amphinomos suffering in the same way in Book 18 when he feels fear at Odysseus-in-disguise's prophecy (153–55):

αὐτὰρ ὁ βῆ κατὰ δῶμα φίλον τετιημένος ἦτορ,
νευστάζων κεφαλῇ· δὴ γὰρ κακὸν ὄσσετο θυμῷ.
ἀλλ' οὐδ' ὣς φύγε κῆρα·

He went through the dear home, *pained in his heart*,
And shaking his head. For he was imagining doom in his mind.
But not even so did he avoid Death.

Here, we have a thematic parallel for Telemachus's first appearance. Amphinomos is full of dread over what he has just heard, but he will not

escape the future he fears. In modern terms, we might again be tempted to see this as an anxiety emerging from a deep conflict in response to fear: neither fight nor flight is possible. Note how both Amphinomos and Telemachus are characterized as occupied by their own thoughts, withdrawing into reverie rather than engaging with the outside world.

Variants in the standard Homeric texts strengthen these associations. When commenting upon Odysseus's first appearance in Book 5, an ancient scholar records Aristonicus' comment that the language of the line is more fit (οἰκειότερον ἐν Ἰλιάδι) for *Iliad* 2.721, where Philoktetes is described: "he lies there on the island suffering harsh pains" (ἀλλ' ὃ μὲν ἐν νήσῳ κεῖτο κρατέρ' ἄλγεα πάσχων = *Od*. 5.13). The scholiast adds that it would be right for *Odysseus* instead to be "pained in his heart" (νῦν δὲ ἔδει τετιημένος ἦτορ εἶναι, Schol. H ad *Od*. 5.13).[8] Similarly Menelaos retreats from Patroklos's body under force in Book 17 of the *Iliad*, described as "troubled in his mind" (τετιηότι θυμῷ) and unwillingly—a phrase which is replaced by τετιημένος ἦτορ in some manuscripts.[9]

The description appears once more with Telemachus at another important juncture. After he has announced his departure at the assembly, Telemachus returns to his home "pained in his heart" (2.298) before he insults the suitors and declares that he is a grown man with a plan (*Od*. 2.312–17):[10]

> ἦ οὐχ ἅλις, ὡς τὸ πάροιθεν ἐκείρετε πολλὰ καὶ ἐσθλὰ
> κτήματ' ἐμά, μνηστῆρες, ἐγὼ δ' ἔτι νήπιος ἦα;
> νῦν δ' ὅτε δὴ μέγας εἰμί, καὶ ἄλλων μῦθον ἀκούων
> πυνθάνομαι, καὶ δή μοι ἀέξεται ἔνδοθι θυμός,
> πειρήσω, ὥς κ' ὔμμι κακὰς ἐπὶ κῆρας ἰήλω,
> ἠὲ Πύλονδ' ἐλθὼν ἢ αὐτοῦ τῷδ' ἐνὶ δήμῳ.
>
> "Isn't it enough that you wasted my many fine possessions before,
> when I was still just a child [νήπιος], suitors?
> But now, when I am big, and I learned by listening to the speech of other men,
> and the anger swells within me,
> I will discover some way that I may visit upon you evil fates
> either after I go to Pylos or here in this country."

The application of the "pained in his heart" phrase here troubled ancient readers—a scholion glosses its use as "not because he is sullen, but because he is thinking about how to leave" (φίλον τετιημένος ἦτορ] οὐκ

ἐσκυθρωπακὼς, ἀλλὰ καὶ φροντίζων ὡς ἀποδημεῖν μέλλων, Schol. ES ad *Od*. 2.298). This scholiastic adjustment points both to the typical interpretation of the line—that it indicates an isolated rumination—and the sense that something critical has changed from the earlier description in Book 1. As Telemachus moves into action and unveils himself as an agent and a thinker, he also moves from his state of paralysis and rumination into a different part of his tale. The state of rumination, which I will discuss shortly, is a result of what some psychologists have called Learned Helplessness. In such a state, Telemachus is incapable both of moving as an agent on his own and of conceiving of narratives with himself at the center.

The two evocations of Telemachus as "troubled at heart" bracket a transformation—they function to highlight that *something* has changed in Odysseus's son in the meantime. The relation between experience, self-perception, and the ability to act is an important concern to the *Odyssey*. What effects this change and what was the problem to begin with? How does the epic indicate the causes of Telemachus's languor and, in turn, what "treatments" were the remedy?

I believe that the answers are two-fold: first, Telemachus has not been part of a community to induct him into adulthood and agency; so, the epic shows him gaining a "Mentor" and beginning to master the skills necessary for a Homeric adulthood.[11] Second, and anticipatory of Odysseus's depiction, it is useful to think of Telemachus as suffering from a related emotional maladaptation as well—a sense of helplessness emerging from an inability to affect his place in the world. In foreshadowing a similar treatment of Odysseus, the *Odyssey*'s narrative will show Telemachus learning to overcome this paralysis both through physical action and an alteration of his understanding of story. Structural parallels between Books 1 and 5, moreover, reinforce the psychological echoes between son and absent father.

B. Education and Communities

As stated earlier, the *Telemachy* has both been well characterized as a type of formative education for its starring character and also recognized for the way that it thematically and structurally anticipates Odysseus's own tales. Indeed, such an argument is far from new: the ancient critic Heraclitus argues that Athena's appearance in the epic is an allegory for the development of Telemachus's powers of reason and that this

development "aroused in him a readiness to undertake responsibility" (*Homeric Problems* 63.5). Why Telemachus needs this education has been understood to a certain extent, but not with significant recourse to modern theories of psychology and education. Telemachus, in fact, has grown up on Ithaca with few peers other than the suitors and, as it seems, no regular or functioning community to be part of his education.[12] From the ancient Greek perspective, this is problematic and sets Telemachus apart from normal society and normative education. Modern studies in cognitive science, most importantly Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development and theories of Distributed Cognition, reveal that this is limiting both developmentally and psychologically. I will discuss each domain in turn.

Telemachus's speech, cited earlier, where he declares that previously he was *nēpios* but now he has "learned by listening to the speech of other men," brings both the limits of his previous education and the process of learning to the forefront for the audience. In another publication, I examine evidence for education in the Homeric epics.[13] While it is clear that they do not depict a system of education—and that such a systematic treatment would have been rare in ancient Greece—the Homeric epics preserve echoes of assumptions about how to learn and how to teach. Hektor, for example, announces that he "has learned to be a noble man" (*Il.*6.444: ἐπεὶ μάθον ἔμμεναι ἐσθλὸς), but reveals nothing specific as to how he learned this.[14] And Phoinix has been sent to war with Achilles to be a tutor of some sort, as is clear from his speech in *Iliad* 9 (437–43).[15] The epics provide an impressionistic survey of a youth developing from being "without speech" (*nēpios*, according to the folk etymology) to acknowledging and controlling speech content, form, and context.[16] Since speech and action are so firmly entwined from a Homeric perspective, it should come as no surprise that the epic elides Telemachus's education in these fields.[17]

When Telemachus declares in Book 2 that he used to be *nēpios*, but is no longer, he makes a distinction between his past self (in Book 1) and his current/future self for the epic's audience. That he has undergone a compressed version of a Homeric education must be understood both from the plot elements that precede Book 2 (discussed below) and the cultural clues available from Homeric diction. Indeed, the language of *nēpios*—together with the depiction of Telemachus—signals a basic understanding of the process of education in ancient Greek culture. The Homeric epics show that youths need to be mentored, must practice their actions with peers, and then execute in the adult realm.

Before considering some modern theoretical frameworks to ascertain the causes of Telemachus's languor in Book 1, I would like to briefly survey the evidence for the educational stages reflected in Homer to help us imagine to what extent Telemachus's position might have appeared abnormal to *ancient audiences*. To start, elsewhere in the epic tradition the deployment of the word *nēpios* functions to mark steps between infancy and adulthood. In the *Iliad* when Phoinix says of Achilles "Peleus sent you as a *senseless child* with Agamemnon, not yet knowing of leveling war and assemblies" (ἤματι τῷ ὅτε σ' ἐκ Φθίης Ἀγαμέμνονι πέμπε / νήπιον οὔ πω εἰδόθ' ὁμοιΐου πολέμοιο / οὐδ' ἀγορέων, 9.439–40), he cannot mean that Achilles was an infant incapable of speech, as a folk etymology of *nē-epos* ("without *epos*") might imply. Instead, his use of the adjective speaks to its cultural resonance: *nēpios* does sometimes denote general immaturity.[18] In the *Odyssey*, Penelope worries about her son's journey because he is a "*nēpios*, unknowing of the toils [of war] and assemblies" (νήπιος, οὔτε πόνων εὖ εἰδὼς οὔτ' ἀγοράων, 8.818). A scholiast (HPQ ad *Od*. 4.818) glosses this line as meaning that Telemachus is "lacking experience in words and deeds" (ἄπειρος τυγχάνει ἔργων καὶ λόγων) and relates the sentiment to Phoinix's tutoring of Achilles in the *Iliad*.[19] Ignorance through inexperience is central to these associations. While the *Iliad* emphasizes elsewhere that it is characteristic of children not to understand correct speech or context ("But, come, let us no longer talk about these things like children," ἀλλ' ἄγε μηκέτι ταῦτα λεγώμεθα νηπύτιοι ὥς, 20.244). Telemachus's comments are worth reconsidering for his conception of the difference between a "child" who is ignorant because of his lack of experience and an adult who is not (*Od*. 2.312–17). For Telemachus, learning comes from "listening to the *muthos* of others" (ἄλλων μῦθον ἀκούων),[20] which may entail an understanding of speech-contexts, contents, and use.[21] Now that Telemachus is no longer *nēpios*, he has called an assembly and he has formulated a plan on his own. But this assembly is only partly successful: he does not receive compensation or compromise from the Ithacans; on the contrary, the assembly itself results in Telemachus leaving his community and the suitors planning to kill him. Telemachus's maturation as a speaker requires further practice and attending to the speeches of his elders—which is part of what happens in Books 3 and 4 during his visits with Nestor and Menelaos.[22]

The cultural background presents an adult world into which youths are initiated through observation (as with Telemachus), tutelage (as with Achilles and Phoinix), and practice in competition with coevals and experimentation in the adult realm. This three-stage process echoes age-

association groups in other parts of Archaic Greek life: choruses were split into performance groups of *paides*, *kouroi/ephebai*, and *andres*.[23] Such coordinated public training, regimented from a young age, offers evidence of a type of education paralleled in other contexts as well.[24]

Insights from psychology and cognitive science also support the general principle outlined so far: from the perspective of the *Odyssey* (and likely its ancient audiences), Telemachus is exhibiting a stunted development as a result of his social context. Modern studies support two aspects of his limitations. First, Telemachus's deficient learning environment has stunted his development as a speaker and a doer. Second, based on his environment and experiences, Telemachus has a limited repertoire of stories to guide his behavior (he has *not yet* learned from the speeches of others); his learning environment has yielded as well an impaired ability to use narrative to develop action.

Although these two propositions are interdependent, I will start by presenting the theoretical support separately. From the perspective of social scientists, a limited educational development in Telemachus's case would be unsurprising. Scientists who study human cognition and education emphasize that human learning occurs in groups (echoing the importance of age-affinity groups in Greek culture). Human development depends on environments that rely on distributed, shared, or extended cognition: for the psychologist L. S. Vygotsky, learning thrives in a social context he describes as a Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD).[25] Charles Underwood has recently re-examined the *Odyssey* from a perspective of learning and development, applying in particular many lessons learned from Vygotsky. For Underwood, the exchanges between Telemachus and Athena convey a "socioculturally distinctive yet implicit theory of learning" (2018:45). The insights of educational psychological may, then, help us conceptualize Telemachus' depiction more vividly. As Vygotsky describes it, the ZPD can include multiple types of relationships; when an adult acts as a tutor, a child is capable of doing things he or she could not possibly do alone.[26] Basic childhood education emphasizes a *tell, show, do* approach that helps to create a shared cognitive frame: the mentor shares her abilities and knowledge with the child in a coordinated action. As I will discuss below, this is the pattern that occurs between Telemachus and Athena.

But Vygotsky's theory is not just about a student-teacher relationship; there is a larger communal aspect that helps to illuminate the nature of Telemachus's privation. Vygotsky emphasizes the importance of imitative ability and collective activity in intellectual and skills-based development.

It is especially important that children acquire skills faster when surrounded by those who have reached more advanced developmental milestones (1978:87–89). Group play and exposure creates opportunities for a child to be "able to subordinate her behavior to rules" when "only later does voluntary self-regulation of behavior arise as an internal function." From this perspective, Telemachus, an only child with limited numbers of teachers and a problematic peer group of older, malicious suitors, would have decreased opportunities to develop a sense of social norms, self-guiding behavior, and morality.[27] Modern studies in distributed cognition support many of these findings.[28]

Related to this process is the development of a sophisticated ability to read other people's intentions. The educational context of ZPD facilitates the hearing and telling of stories alongside the imitative play that helps children learn to read human behavior.[29] In part, a narrative zone develops and facilitates what Alan Palmer calls "intermental thought." In such a communal activity system, children go through cycles of internalization and externalization: they apply the patterns and stories they experience to themselves and the world in cycles that work cooperatively with those around them (2010:39–41). People who develop in isolated contexts suffer from a more limited ability to read other people, a concomitant limited talent for interpreting narratives, and possess a smaller repertoire of paradigmatic narratives.[30]

To summarize: I am suggesting that at his first appearance, Telemachus exhibits a limited understanding of narrative—or, perhaps, an understanding of the wrong narratives—has a limited number of examples and stories to draw from, and that the explanation for both these features is his deficient communal context. As Underwood also demonstrates well in his recent book, the epic showcases Athena acting as his mentor to supplement the education he did not receive and shows him maturing under her guidance.[31] But it is not merely a lack of proper education that Telemachus suffers; in addition, his deficient community and upbringing has made him passive and helpless. To develop fully into adulthood he must go out into the world to *do* what he has been told and shown and to acquire new narratives to guide him.

C. The Mentoring of Telemachus

Given the overview of the educational deficits I have discussed and the effects so far attributed to Telemachus—a limited variety of narratives to

draw from, a correlative deficiency in language, and an inability to effect action—it is worthwhile to consider the process and the content of Athena's mentoring in brief. When she encounters him, he invites her in with an open-ended offer of hospitality that is focused on *her* needs: "after you have dinner, tell me what you need" (δείπνου πασσάμενος μυθήσεαι ὅττεό σε χρή, 1.124). When Telemachus addresses the stranger he is dismissive of the suitors (1.158–78), but continues his wistful dream that they would be dispelled if his father returned. His father will not return, however, because, according to Telemachus, he is dead (... τοῦ δ᾽ ὤλετο νόστιμον ἦμαρ, 168).[32] His expression of his own suffering, however, is couched in externalized concerns: he opens by asking his guest not to be angry and closes with questions about the stranger's identities. In his tale, he says nothing about himself: the story is of the suitors' transgressions and the vivid evocation of his father's corpse, whose "white bones, I suppose, rot in the rain as they lie on the shore or a wave rolls them about in the sea" (ἀνέρος, οὗ δή που λεύκ᾽ ὀστέα πύθεται ὄμβρῳ / κείμεν᾽ ἐπ᾽ ἠπείρου, ἢ εἰν ἁλὶ κῦμα κυλίνδει, 161–62). Even when he complains of the suitors—they are "eating up the household" of someone else—Telemachus cannot even place himself at the center of his own suffering in his first speech.

From the perspective of narrative memory, Telemachus's narration of events is almost entirely separated from his experience of those same events.[33] His *self* is separate from the story. When he is present, it is as an object rather than a narrative subject or agent. When Athena introduces herself in her response (1.179–212), she models a very different narrative approach: her verbs are active; she is Mentes, the son of Ankhialus and a lord of the Taphians. She has a past (she knows Laertes) and she has a mission: she has come to tell the story of Odysseus who is *not* dead (οὐ γάρ πω τέθνηκεν ἐπὶ χθονὶ δῖος Ὀδυσσεύς, 196). In her telling, Odysseus still suffers, but he is present in the story in a way Telemachus has not been as the "savage men hold him and keep him *unwillingly*" (χαλεποὶ δέ μιν ἄνδρες ἔχουσιν, / ἄγριοι, οἵ που κεῖνον ἐρυκανόωσ᾽ ἀέκοντα, 198–99). In her telling, Odysseus is also an object as a victim of the gods (195) and the deeds of wicked men, but he still has a will. And, further, he has the ability to escape his misfortune: Athena declares that he "will figure out some way to get home, since he is a man of many devices" (φράσσεται ὥς κε νέηται, ἐπεὶ πολυμήχανός ἐστιν, 205). Telemachus's dispirited response (214–20) confirms that he has a limited sense of his identity (he feigns uncertainty that he is Odysseus's son) and continues to engage in fantasy, wishing that he were the son "of a man

who met old age among his own possessions" (ἀνέρος, ὃν κτεάτεσσιν ἑοῖσ' ἔπι γῆρας ἔτετμε, 218).

Telemachus's characterization, initiated at his first appearance, advances through these exchanges. Athena, in her responses, reflects something of the *tell, show, do* approach to mentoring I mentioned earlier. She *tell*s Telemachus about herself and Odysseus and expresses different relationships between personal agency and external forces; then she *show*s Telemachus a different way to talk and think about the events occurring around him. If we imagine Athena as establishing a new Zone of Proximal Development for Telemachus, it is a shared cognitive space where she models different concepts of agency and reinforces culturally normative rules of behavior. In her next response (1.222–29), she invites him to consider the feast around him as an abnormal set of events. She invokes normative cultural forces to reinforce his view of the suitors as transgressors and himself as the aggrieved rather than a passive participant watching the withering of someone else's estate: "a man would take umbrage when he saw so many shameful things, should some man of discernment, come among them" (νεμεσσήσαιτό κεν ἀνὴρ / αἴσχεα πόλλ' ὁρόων, ὅς τις πινυτός γε μετέλθοι, 1.228–229). Here Athena corrects Telemachus's initial fear that she might feel *nemesis* at his words in his own house (ξεῖνε φίλ', ἦ καί μοι νεμεσήσεαι ὅττι κεν εἴπω; 158); it is *he* who should be feeling anger.[34]

Telemachus's primary education conditioned his vision of himself and his conceptualization of behavior norms, in part because it lacked a sufficient story repertoire; he suffers from a deficiency of other examples of how to live and act in the world. The stories the audience knows he has shared with the suitors have been of the troubles these warriors face returning home. But what of these narrative models apply to their experience and their futures? Telemachus's own personal narrative has been of an absent father whose death in war should empower him as heir.[35] Yet, this moment has been continually forestalled.

Indeed, one way to think about Telemachus's journey in the *Telemachy* is as a quest for a new type of story. As the exchange between Athena and Telemachus continues, the former consistently emphasizes a different world-view and course of action to the latter (at times through the story of Orestes). When Telemachus again expresses the view—or perhaps the wish—that his father is dead, (1.234–44), he at least puts himself in the tale. Yet here he is still estranged from agency: he no longer resists accepting that he is Odysseus's son, but instead mourns that his father did not receive a proper burial, which would have given *Telemachus* great fame

(ἠδέ κε καὶ ᾧ παιδὶ μέγα κλέος ἤρατ' ὀπίσσω, 240). Without being able to mourn his father, he suffers even more and now makes himself the object of divine machination, "since the gods have given me other evil pains" (ἐπεί νύ μοι ἄλλα θεοὶ κακὰ κήδε' ἔτευξαν, 244).

It may seem strange to see this speech as a step forward, but Telemachus accepts an identity, puts himself in a story (even if as a passive object) and, in the narration that follows, calls the household his own: he ends his speech by lamenting that "they are ruining *my* house and soon they will destroy *me, too*" (οἶκον ἐμόν· τάχα δή με διαρραίσουσι καὶ αὐτόν, 251). It is after this strong expression of selfhood and concern for his fate that Athena tells Telemachus to stop thinking about his father (whose fate he cannot control) and start thinking about "how *you* will compel the suitors from your home" (σὲ δὲ φράζεσθαι ἄνωγα, / ὅππως κε μνηστῆρας ἀπώσεαι ἐκ μεγάροιο, 1.269–70), an enjoinder she repeats (1.294–97) after giving him a specific course of action: call an assembly, invoke the gods, tell the suitors to go home, and then go in search of news of his father. Athena offers him a different story to consider: she tells him of how Orestes gained *kleos* of his own by killing his father's murderer and sets him as equal: he is not a hapless boy, he is "very big and noble, / so be brave that a man born in the future might speak well of [him]" (μάλα γάρ σ' ὁρόω καλόν τε μέγαν τε, / ἄλκιμος ἔσσ', ἵνα τίς σε καὶ ὀψιγόνων ἐὺ εἴπῃ, 1.301–2).[36]

Throughout these exchanges, we find a compressed representation of mentoring as Athena models a different conception of agency and suggests different action for Telemachus. She shows him how to behave and speak herself, furnishes him with another model of behavior (Orestes), and tells him what to do. In the scenes that precede his departure for Pylos, Telemachus begins to act and speak in a different way. After Athena leaves (1.319–23), Telemachus intervenes in a dispute between his mother and the suitors about the content of Phemios' songs.[37] In a development typical of adolescence, Telemachus rebels against his parent of the opposite sex in the absence of his father. He tells his mother to return to her rooms—which surprises her (360–61) and then he addresses the suitors with a series of commands: he calls them to assembly in the morning and makes himself the speaker of an authoritative speech (ἵν' ὔμιν μῦθον ἀπηλεγέως ἀποείπω). He channels the very righteous anger Athena said "a man who knows" would have when he declares the suitors' behavior improper (377–80). The narrator records that the suitors "bit down on their cups as in surprise at Telemachus" (Τηλέμαχ', ἦ μάλα δή σε διδάσκουσιν θεοὶ αὐτοὶ / ὑψαγόρην τ' ἔμεναι καὶ θαρσαλέως

ἀγορεύειν, 382–83) and Antinoos declares, pointedly and ironically for the audience, that "the gods themselves are teaching you, Telemachus, to be an arrogant-tongued man and to speak boldly" (ὣς ἔφαθ', οἱ δ' ἄρα πάντες ὀδὰξ ἐν χείλεσι φύντες / Τηλέμαχον θαύμαζον, ὃ θαρσαλέως ἀγόρευε, 384–85). In the following book, Telemachus continues this action, claiming agency for himself in calling the assembly and shaming the suitors and their families (2.64–68), enacting cultural standards of behavior in invoking the gods for retribution (2.87–88), and moving on to actions after the assembly's end.

D. The Impact of a Bad Education: Learned Helplessness

The epic shows Telemachus suffering in part because of the deficiencies of his social context, one I suggest it depicts as having a negative effect on his development as a person. This development is not just about "hard skills"—i.e., being able to give a speech—but it is also about what modern educators now call "soft skills"—qualities like confidence, resilience, and focus. Part of his problem is that Telemachus has a limited view of himself as an agent in the world. His life experiences have had a deleterious effect on his narrative repertoire and his sense of self, and the two are connected. Rehabilitating Telemachus, then, takes more than a remedial education: he also requires emotional treatment.

In closing this chapter, I want to move briefly from an educational to a clinical perspective on Telemachus, exploring how the epic "diagnoses" him by connecting problematic behavior with past experience—and perspectives taken on this experience—then implicitly proposes "treatment" through its presentation of ameliorative steps performed by its characters. The *Odyssey* presents Telemachus and Odysseus in their narrative debuts as listless or helpless; both are visited by gods to initiate action; and each can be said to undergo transformations of will, to put things broadly. Adducing a framework of Learned Helplessness illustrates that this representation is not of an intrinsic human state, but that it results instead from experience and is treatable.[38]

Learned Helplessness (LH) and Learned Helplessness Effects are terms that psychologists have used to characterize a steady decrease in performance when animals or humans are exposed to "uncontrollable outcomes."[39] An early experiment demonstrated that dogs, given the

possibility to stop exposure to electric shock by pressing a lever, perform more slowly and less effectively over time if the lever randomly or rarely produces that outcome.[40] In a simple example available in a short video, a teacher induces LH by presenting students with sets of possible and impossible anagrams; students presented initially with two impossible tasks show a marked unwillingness or inability to complete the third solvable anagram while students with solvable tasks perform equally well on the third task.[41]

Although there is some debate about the extent of its importance, LH has been linked to a wide array of mental health issues (e.g., depression and anxiety) and larger social issues like unemployment and disparities in physical health.[42] More substantially, a state of LH has been shown to impede the learning of new skills and effective execution of old ones.[43] Such an incongruence, derived from repeated and uncontrollable failure, called by psychologists a person-environment mismatch, can prevent plan-making and disrupt basic self-worth, resulting in an overwhelming view of the world as dangerous and uncontrollable.[44] A typical cycle of response is to re-organize or re-analyze events rather than offer new solutions, to ruminate excessively on personal circumstances, and then to engage finally in what is called "avoidance coping," "an escapist attitude and the attempt to cut off the current experience from awareness."[45]

Whether or not LH effects are wholly maladaptive—*not* feeling responsible for a situation can potentially liberate people to engage in new activities without coping with past failure[46]—a state of helplessness can be paralyzing and require intervention. From the prior discussion of Telemachus, it seems clear that when he first appears in the epic he is mired in a state of paralysis. In describing his state, Telemachus clearly sees himself as an object and not an agent. In Book 1, Telemachus blames Zeus for mankind's suffering (ἀλλά ποθι Ζεὺς αἴτιος, ὅς τε δίδωσιν / ἀνδράσιν ἀλφηστῆσιν ὅπως ἐθέλῃσιν ἑκάστῳ, 1.348–49).[47] As I will discuss in the next chapter, Telemachus is similar to his father in Book 5—the narrative depicts him in a reverie, looking after his father's return so that *he* might disperse the suitors and safeguard their place (1.114–16). His world view is one in which he has no possibility of effecting change and so he engages in "state rumination," a hallmark of LH effects—colloquially, self-pity—and avoidance coping.[48]

The audience witnesses what I suggest is a therapeutic intervention from Athena's first appearance. Not only does she help to educate him, but she also addresses his problematic worldview.[49] When she assures him that his father is not dead, she concedes that all in the world is not within

his control (the gods ruined Odysseus's journey, savage men hold him 1.195–99), but she still places his agency at the forefront, asserting that Odysseus will "figure out how to come home, since he is *polymēkhanos*" (φράσσεται ὥς κε νέηται, ἐπεὶ πολυμήχανός ἐστιν, 1.205). In subsequent comments, Athena equivocates about Odysseus's fate (1.267–70), but insists that Telemachus must himself consider how to be done with the suitors—that is, how to lay claim to agency (1.294–97). Throughout the opening movement, the thematic investigation of agency is indexed through a lexical emphasis on human planning and thought: Odysseus will *plan* to save himself (φράσσεται, 205), according to Athena, who orders his son to plan, too (φράζεσθαι δὴ ἔπειτα κατὰ φρένα καὶ κατὰ θυμόν / ὅππως κε μνηστῆρας ἐνὶ μεγάροισι τεοῖσι / κτείνῃς ἠὲ δόλῳ ἢ ἀμφαδόν, 294–96; cf. 264) balanced against Telemachus's echo of Zeus when he claims that the gods devise evil for Odysseus (νῦν δ' ἑτέρως ἐβόλοντο θεοὶ κακὰ μητιόωντες / οἳ κεῖνον μὲν ἄϊστον ἐποίησαν περὶ πάντων / ἀνθρώπων, 1.234–36) and likewise established evil pains for him (ἐπεί νύ μοι ἄλλα θεοὶ κακὰ κήδε' ἔτευξαν, 1.244). Athena emboldens Telemachus to make a plan, evoking a cooperation in agency between god and man. Such cooperation is a positive inversion of Zeus's complaint, which is well encapsulated in the subsequent description of Telemachus lying awake at night "making plans in his thoughts about the journey which Athena showed him" (... βούλευε φρεσὶν ἧσιν ὁδόν, τὴν πέφραδ' Ἀθήνη, 1.444).

This limited summary of the events of Book 1 reveals a thematic pattern that examines agency and provides an interventive response to Zeus's complaint about mortals, discussed in the last chapter (i.e., that they blame the gods when they make their own suffering worse through stupidity), and Telemachus's inaction. Here, (1) a character disavows some agency with a resigned "gods are in control" statement;[50] (2) a divine or more experienced figure correctively attributes more to human agency; as (3) both figures negotiate a relationship between controllable and uncontrollable outcomes; then (4) Athena expresses an ideal cooperative aesthetic[51] between man and god that inverts (positively) Zeus's initial complaint;[52] and (5) builds upon unclear causal connections in doubly motivated events, culminating in assertions about (6) divine guarantee of justice in the human realm.[53] In short, the interplay between Athena and Telemachus presents a sophisticated integration of divine power and human choice, presenting a cooperative and mutually reinforcing approach to action (see table 2.1 below).[54]

Table 2.1. Patterns of agency ascription in the *Telemachy*

(1) A character disavows agency by expressing a resigned "gods are in control" statement
(2) An experienced figure correctively attributes more to human agency
(3) Both figures negotiate between controllable and uncontrollable outcomes
(4) Ideal cooperative aesthetic between man and god
(5) Doubly motivated events with complex causal relations
(6) Divine guarantee of justice in the human realm

As Telemachus says in Book 2, he learns from the speech of *others*.[55] In Book 1, he learns from Athena; in Book 2, he practices speech in the assembly in Ithaca. In Books 3–4, he continues executing plans and actions a little more independently. In the further development of Telemachus, the epic pursues two syllabi: both a continued contemplation of agency and a series of experiments in narrative control and interpretation. Nestor echoes Zeus when he pairs human decision-making and divine wrath: he says that Zeus decreed a grievous homecoming for the Argives who suffered a terrible fate thanks to the rage of Athena, only after Nestor himself criticizes them for being neither prudent nor just (3.132–36).[56] Here, then, is a critical expression of the relationship(s) between fate and agency—from Nestor's perspective, it seems that the gods are obligated to make things worse when men do not behave properly. But implicit as well is the promise (7) that prudent and righteous men will be rewarded. Nestor's worldview, then, includes an additional corrective: for him, (a) bad things happen to bad people rightly (e.g., Aigisthos, 3.194); when bad things happen (b) there is a human cause; (c) the gods may cause evil or make humans instruments of justice. But there is an implicit contradiction in this worldview: (d) sometimes bad things happen to good men like Odysseus.

But how does Telemachus progress through these steps toward a different view of agency? It is here where the poem offers an initial therapeutic response to Telemachus's state. When he begins his journey, Telemachus does not subscribe to Nestor's limited theodicy because of his own life experience: his father never returned, the suitors do what they want, and he seems powerless to change his circumstances.[57] His journey consists of remarkably little action: his education consists of changing contexts, observing the behavior of others, and listening to the stories from the past and contemplating their meanings. Although Telemachus's

journey is a critical step in preparing him to act, it is incomplete for two reasons. First, on a narrative level, Telemachus's journey functions structurally to anticipate themes and patterns in the appearance of his father—and it is Odysseus's return to agency that is paramount in this tale. Second, both narratives combine sometimes contradictory views of will and fate and weigh them. Just as Telemachus learns more sophisticated ways to evaluate the progression of events in the world, so too the audience is invited to learn, consider, and debate. In this way, the *Telemachy* is therapeutic for members of the audience as well.

It is difficult to separate the themes of agency and narrative because they are interdependent in a poem where agents tell so many stories and where so much action consists of speech. When Telemachus goes abroad, storytelling functions as the primary educative experience. One might add that Telemachus observes proper customs, thus widening the circle of his ZPD, but a central purpose of this narrative is for him (and the audience by extension) to learn about Odysseus. In this case, it means learning about other stories to figure out how Odysseus's homecoming tale relates to others. In a way, Nestor, Peisistratos, Menelaos, and even Helen join and then replace Athena as teachers. Telemachus continues to develop during these conversations, especially in his use of language.

When he arrives in Pylos, it is Telemachus who initiates the storytelling (3.83–101) and he clearly expresses his purpose to learn his father's *kleos* ("I come in search of the wide fame of my father," πατρὸς ἐμοῦ κλέος εὐρὺ μετέρχομαι, 3.83). The epic may also mark his language as authoritative by allowing him to echo the Homeric narrator in his narrative strategies. This is not an idle observation: Telemachus's interest in his father's *kleos* is also an interest in his own and his place in the world. And his interlocutors in Books 3 and 4 mark the visual closeness and speech similarity of father and son as a sign of their likeness and narrative interdependence.

Telemachus is also featured in these passages as contemplating and responding to potential narratives. He rejects Nestor's proposal that Odysseus will come home (3.226–28) and inquires about the story of Aigisthos, wondering why Menelaos was not in a position to help his brother Agamemnon evade his murderer. Here Telemachus shows himself to be thinking more deliberately, viewing actors as agents, and, perhaps, exploring potential resolutions to his own story (3.252–56). The pattern recurs in Sparta where Telemachus asks for the story of his father and attempts to control the outcome by describing him as already dead (4.316–23). Menelaos' tales provide him with more news about his father

—that he is trapped somewhere, the same information Athena provided in Book 1—and Telemachus responds only briefly (4.598–608): he asks not to be detained in Sparta, (using the same verb twice that Athena used in Book 1 (199; cf. the narrator at 1.14) to describe Odysseus's detainment: ἔρυκε; ἐρύκεις), he worries that his companions are in distress (ἀλλ' ἤδη μοι ἀνιάζουσιν ἑταῖροι, 4.598), and he declines the gift of a horse as impractical.

Through the process of this journey, Telemachus undergoes "treatment" both for his deficient education and his sense of helplessness. From the moment Athena arrives in Book 1, he engages steadily in more expressions of agency and he engages in eliciting stories from others. While Telemachus does not narrate tales the way Nestor and Menelaos do (perhaps because of his lack of experience), he does depict the world in his own words, and the story he tells is one where he moves steadily closer to the center. By the end of Book 4, Telemachus may not have won all the *kleos* that befits a young man of his stature, but he has showed an interest and mastery of *kleos* and story by seeking them out, weighing different options, and charting courses of his own. Most importantly, by the end of the *Telemachy*, Telemachus seems to have come up with a plan for what happens after he leaves Sparta. He does not articulate it—but I suspect this may be part of the point. In acting in the role of heroic agent, like his father, Telemachus learns to conceal as he learns to reveal.

This chapter's emphasis on Telemachus's stalled development and his rehabilitation has offered an important opportunity to explore some of the fundamental assumptions of Homeric psychology. First, the epic clearly shows that a person's mental state—perhaps previously understood as "character"—is neither intrinsic nor immutable. Someone like Telemachus can change for the better or worse based on their experiences. The epic demonstrates through Telemachus that a man from good stock can be ruined by a deficient educational process: the absence of a good teacher, a problematic peer group, and a limited number of opportunities to practice the activities of adult life. Additionally, and in parallel, it shows the emotional or affective outcome of a learned lack of agency: Telemachus is merely a witness to the events of his world and he does not even imagine himself as an agent changing them until after Athena's intervention. Telemachus transforms through a compressed re-educational process that highlights the gaining of the ability to see himself as an actor in the world,

to express a view of the present and future with himself in it, and to begin to show a mastery of narrative.

Homeric epic, of course, is not a psychological textbook: these patterns occur in part because they are the very motifs and themes that make Odysseus's return possible. But it is important that his story is not simply a legendary return and revenge narrative. Odysseus's return is psychologically dynamic and complex. To an extent, Telemachus's tale functions not merely to establish expectations for Odysseus's narrative, but by depicting the development of a depressed and marginalized child into an independent person it lays out foundational assumptions about what it means to be a human being: how we learn, how our development can take unhelpful turns, and how it is always possible for us to change, for better or worse.

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1 Schol. HMQ ad *Od*. 1.93a ἐλθὲ .. .κεῖθεν δ' ἐς Κρήτην παρ' Ἰδομενῆα ἄνακτα· Cf. Schol. HMQR ad *Od*. 3.313.

2 Several of the arguments of this chapter are explored in Christensen 2018b. For the structure of the *Telemachy* as anticipating that of Odysseus's return, see Barker and Christensen 2015; cf. Apthorp 1980. The events of the *Telemachy* may happen simultaneously with those of Odysseus's return: Reece 1993:170. For the common experiences of father and son, cf. Rose 1967; Fenik 1974:5–70; Reece 1994:71–99.

3 In much of this analysis I parallel the work of Charles Underwood (2018) on the way the *Odyssey* reflects a development of the self from the perspective of educational psychology. (This book came out simultaneously with some of my first publications on the topic: Christensen 2018b and 2018d). His use of Vygotsky is more integrated and sensitive than mine; where my approach differs, apart from some interpretive detail, is in the consideration of maladaptations.

4 For Telemachus' daydream as a fantasy under revision, see Underwood 2018:25–31.

5 Some scholars see this as an initiation ritual; see Felson-Rubin 1994:67–91; Thalmann 1998a:206–15; and Petropoulos 2011. For discussion and bibliography, see also Murnaghan 2002 and Barker and Christensen 2015. See Page 1955:169–79 for the unity of the *Telemachy* (Books 2–4); cf. Katz 1991:29–33 for earlier opinions on *Telemachy*.

6 For "freezing" as an indication of a deferred fight-or-flight response, see, e.g., Kozlowska et al. 2015. Such a deferment over time can cause pathological anxiety responses, see, e.g., Steimer 2002. For the failure of a flight-or-flight instinct in response to trauma, see Morris 1995:216.

7 For oral-formulaic poetry and traditional phrases, see the Introduction, and the overview in Barker and Christensen 2019:20-43.

8 For connections between Odysseus and Philoktetes, see Chapter 3.

9 Schol. ad *Il*. 17.664b2. After Hera has been rebuffed by Zeus at the end of *Iliad* 1, most manuscripts depict Hephaestus as ministering to his mother, "white-armed Hera" (λευκωλένῳ Ἥρῃ, 1.572), while the scholia report the variant τετιημένῃ ἦτορ (Schol. bT ad *Il*. 1.572 Did. (?) λευκωλένῳ Ἥρῃ: ἄμεινον γράφειν „τετιημένῃ ἦτορ"). Hera's ability to

affect the action or even know Zeus' plan has recently been limited, so it makes sense that she would be characterized as being upset, unwilling, and trapped.

10 For ancient authors imagining Telemachus becoming an orator, see Wissman 2009:423–25. For a recent discussion of the educational purpose of the *Telemachy*, see Petropoulos 2011; cf. Clarke 1967:43; and Heitman 2005:58–62.

11 In Book 1, of course, Athena is disguised as a mysterious Mentes; later on, she returns as Odysseus's friend Mentor. See Petropoulos (2011:10–15) for a discussion of how Mentes/Mentor in Books 1 and 2 functions to induce the idea of the missing father in the psychological mirroring required to attain certain aspects of masculinity.

12 For Telemachus' interaction with the suitors as part of the process of development as sketched out by Vygotsky and others, see Underwood 2018:57–59.

13 See Christensen 2018d for a fuller exploration of Telemachus from the perspective of Homeric assumptions regarding education.

14 For historical evidence of military training by age-group in archaic Greece, see Griffith 2001:36–39; cf. Van Wees 1996 for implicit types of training in the Homeric poems. For tutelage under older men in archaic poetry, see, for example, Theognis (1.27–30, 33–36, and 305–8).

15 Phoinix's memorable line has long been held as indicative of some larger rhetorical program. In commenting on this passage, the scholiast, who imagines that Achilles needs to learn "rhetoric" (τὸ τῆς ῥητορικῆς ὄνομα εἰδώς, schol. bT ad *Il.* 9.443), offers other passages attesting to the discipline in Homer. For Greek rhetoric as a "teachable skill" and for the complex character of the speeches represented in Homer, see Knudsen 2014:38–87.

16 The etymology of *nēpios* is uncertain, but a connection between the word and ability in speech is made in Greek texts (hence a potential folk etymology of νη-ἔπω, comparable to Lat. Infans; e.g., Hesychius' gloss "speechless" νηπύτιον· νήπιον, ἄφωνον); cf. Menelaos' critcism of Eteoneus (πάις ὣς νήπια βάζεις, *Od.* 4.32). Edmunds 1990 argues that *nēpios* has an unsocialized or antisocial connotation (followed by Elmer 2013:140); Petropoulos suggests it implies "immaturity in the extreme" (2011:84). For continuities between the rhetorical strategies of Homeric speakers and those described by Aristotle, see Knudsen 2014, for whom Homeric rhetoric was likely "something that must be learned and consciously cultivated by habit, an ability, implying the existence of greater and lesser degrees of sophistication and success" (102).

17 For speech and action in the epics and speech as action, see Martin 1989; Roochnik 1990; and Minchin 2007.

18 "Son of Peleus, don't hope to frighten me off / like some kind of child, since I myself also know well / how to utter insults and abuse" (Πηλεΐδη μὴ δὴ ἐπέεσσί με νηπύτιον ὣς / ἔλπεο δειδίξεσθαι, ἐπεὶ σάφα οἶδα καὶ αὐτὸς / ἠμὲν κερτομίας ἠδ' αἴσυλα μυθήσασθαι [*Il.* 20. 431–33]).

19 On Phoinix and the *Odyssey*'s Mentor as "tutors," see Griffith 2001:34–35; on such apprenticeship tutelage, see Wissman 2009:420–25.

20 This also means understanding what is better and what is worse: αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ θυμῷ νοέω καὶ οἶδα ἕκαστα / ἐσθλά τε καὶ τὰ χέρεια· πάρος δ' ἔτι νήπιος ἦα (18.228–29). The speech-aspect of νήπιος is not always activated in Homeric usage, but is associated with limited thinking and the "thoughts of children;" see Wissman 2009:427.

21 Schol. DEJMa ad *Od.* 1.93b emphasizes that someone who was raised by women would

not have the opportunity to practice speeches previously (ἀλλ' ἔδει τὸν ἐν γυναιξὶ τεθραμμένον, λύπαις τεταπεινωμένον, ῥητορειῶν οὐ πεπειραμένον οὐδεπώποτε, πολύτροπον γενέσθαι παραπλησίως τῷ πατρί).

22 On Telemachus' journey to Pylos and Sparta and the importance of the effects of Nestor and Menelaos' speeches, see Barker and Christensen 2015.

23 See Griffin (2001:44–45 and 48–50) for similar age gradation in Spartan military training. Cf. also Collins 2004, who emphasizes the "value that Greek culture, and especially local Greek communities, placed on the spontaneous ability to recite or sing poetry on demand" (197).

24 For the importance of practicing speech and regulating behavior in communal dining halls in Sparta and Crete, see Griffith 2001:50; cf. Plut. *Lyc*. 18–19.

25 See Vygotsky 1978:88; cf. Bruner 1986:71–75; Underwood 2018:23–55.

26 See Bruner 1986:75–76; cf. Cole and Engeström (1993:60–61) for ZPD as a type of cognitive distribution: under the guidance of adults, children perform more complex tasks. For the perspective of cognitive apprenticeship supporting this, see Collins, Brown, and Holcum 1991.

27 Vygotsky follows Piaget in showing that cooperation with other children allows the emergence of "moral judgment" (1978:90); see also Pea 1993:51.

28 Hatch and Gardner (1993:166–69) argue that cognition in learning is a product of the interplay of cultural, local, and personal forces. The outer circle sets up norms, standards, expectation, and larger cultural fields of knowledge. Local fields provide adjacent standards but also provide individuals who share in or influence individual cognition. The personal field includes the "attributes and experiences" that children might bring with them (169).

29 See Zunshine (2006:9–15) for the relationship between our adaptation "to read minds" in order to deal with real people extended to our desire and ability to "read" fiction.

30 Gottshall, 2012:58: "The psychologist and novelist Keith Oakley calls stories the flight simulators of human social life."

31 Underwood goes so far as to suggest that Athena prompts cognition in Telemachus (2018:32–34). Cf. Nagy 2013, 280-282 for Athena as "activating" Telemachus' mental power.

32 In using ἀπώλεσε νόστιμον ἦμαρ, Telemachus states that he thinks his father is dead, see Danek 1988:60–61.

33 For the importance of autobiographical memory in human development, see the Introduction and Chapter 4.

34 For the cultural poetics of *nemesis*, see Scott 1980; see Minchin 2002 for an overview of rebuke as a speech-act. For self-rebuke, see Ebbott 1999 (on Helen).

35 On the theme of Telemachus' frozen state, see Murnaghan 2002.

36 On the importance of the Orestes theme in the *Odyssey*, see Murnaghan 2002:146-48, and Barker and Christensen 2014.

37 On Telemachus and Penelope in Book 1, cf. Underwood 2018:89–94. See Chapter 7 for a discussion of this passage.

38 Some of these arguments are explored in Christensen 2018b.

39 For the first use of the term, see Abraham 1911. Mikulincer (1994) offers six criteria to

recognize deficits caused by LH: (1) LH deficits are present when a person displays problems in functioning and task performance; (2) LH deficits follow exposure to uncontrollable bad events that disrupt the equilibrium between the person and the environment; (3) LH deficits occur mainly when the uncontrollable bad event is appraised to be an imminent threat to one's basic commitments; (4) LH deficits occur mainly when exposure to uncontrollable bad events leads to the heightening of self-focused attention; (5) LH deficits are distally mediated by the acquisition of unfavorable expectancies of control during exposure to uncontrollable bad events and the generalization of these expectancies to new situation; (6) LH deficits are proximally mediated by the adoption of off-task coping.

40 See Seligman and Maier 1967 and Overmaier and Seligman 1967; cf. Mikulincer 1994:4–5.

41 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MTqBP-x3yR0.

42 Bibring 1953 places helplessness at the core of depression; See Peterson and Seligman 1983 for victimization. See Peterson 1985 and Mikulincer (1994:2–6) for overviews of attributions.

43 See Lavelle et al. 1979 for LH effects in education and test-taking; cf. Heckhausen 1977. Human subjects who experience repeated lack of control over outcomes, transfer expectations of no control to new tasks; see Mikulincer 1994:6 and 246.

44 See Maier and Seligman 1976; Feather 1982; and Skinner 1985 for expectancy constructions in LH; cf. Mikulincer 1994:239.

45 Mikulincer 1994, 241 and 257; cf. Lazarus and Folkman 1991.

46 For LH effects in response to uncontrollable situations: Klinger 1975 and Kuhl 1981.

47 Cf. 1.376–80 when Telemachus prays for retributive deeds from Zeus (αἴ κέ ποθι Ζεὺς δῷσι παλίντιτα ἔργα γενέσθαι). This seems to be an ironic echo of Zeus' comments at 1.32–33.

48 For state rumination, see below, nn. 74 and 80.

49 For Clarke (1967, 44), Nestor and Menelaos are surrogate fathers who introduce Telemachus to the heroic world.

50 For other fatalistic expressions, see for example *Od*. 2.33–34; 3.83–91 (Telemachus ascribes his father's absence to Zeus); 4.127–34, 181–82, 235–37, and 260–64 (Menelaos and Helen seem especially fatalistic); 4.501–20 (Poseidon ends Ajax' *nostos*); 4.722–28 (Penelope blames Zeus for the loss of Odysseus and Telemachus); 14.39 (Eumaios); 14.262–65 (Zeus caused the Trojan War).

51 For the cooperative aesthetic, see 2.115–22 (where the suitors blame their fortune on Athena's intervention and Penelope's intelligence); 4.712–14 (Penelope and Medon are unclear whether Telemachus or a god is the author of his actions); 13.365 (shared agency between Athena and Odysseus); 17.243; 17.601; 19.2; 19.137–39; 21.201.

52 The action of the poem, in a corollary to Zeus' negative comments, is positively depicted as a partnership between man and god, where Athena empowers Odysseus to act for himself, see Kitto 1966:132–33; cf. Adkins 1960:13. This cooperative aesthetic refers to some of the events described as "double motivation," see Segal 1994:217; for a bibliography, see Teffeteller 2003:15.

53 For the gods as guarantors of justice, see *Od*. 2.65–68 and 3.205–9; 14.83–84; 24.186–90; 24.442–49. Throughout, the epic experiments with different types of human causality and

agency/instrument of the gods.

54 For a bleaker interpretation, see Fenik (1974:212 and 222) for three relationships: man brings his own doom, gods punish; gods encourage men along criminal paths; gods arbitrarily impose suffering.

55 For Underwood (2018, 64–67), Book 2 explores further steps in ZPD as Telemachus meets diverse audiences. Similarly, Nestor and Menelaos are extensions of the mentoring process, 80–86.

56 Note the resonance with mental operations in λυγρὸν ἐνὶ φρεσὶ μήδετο νόστον and οὔ τι νοήμονες. Athena similarly accuses the suitors (τῶ νῦν μνηστήρων μὲν ἔα βουλήν τε νόον τε / ἀφραδέων, ἐπεὶ οὔ τι νοήμονες οὐδὲ δίκαιοι, 281–82) and Odysseus maligns the Phaeacians (ὦ πόποι, οὐκ ἄρα πάντα νοήμονες οὐδὲ δίκαιοι, 13.209).

57 Telemachus attributes agency to the gods (3.205–9). The incompleteness of his re-education makes traveling to Pylos insufficient. Menelaos' Sparta furnishes additional contexts that help to change Telemachus in meaningful ways; see Murnaghan 2002:144–50.

3

Escaping Ogygia, An Isolated Man

τί γὰρ ἐλαφρὸν ἔτ' ἐστὶν ἄ-
πρακτ' ὀδυρόμενον δονεῖν
καρδίαν;

What help is there for a man who drowns his heart
By grieving over the things he cannot change?

Bacchylides, *Processions 1*

The *Odyssey* quickly moves to the trials of the father from those of the son; even before Telemachus's journey is complete, we see Odysseus for the first time in the epic. It might seem strange to abandon Telemachus's narrative *in medias res* (for he does not travel from Sparta back to Pylos until Book 15), but it provides Telemachus with a delayed return (like his father), even while completing aspects of his education: he has decided that his father is not coming home; he has learned from both Nestor and Menelaos; and he has made a choice to act upon returning. In addition to advancing the plot of the *Telemachy*, this narrative's essential themes and structures anticipate and frame Odysseus's forthcoming story and the epic that follows.[1] Furthermore, as I comment in closing Chapter 2, the epic uses Telemachus to establish certain psychological and developmental baselines: through his story the *Odyssey* affirms that people can be affected negatively by their experiences, that controlling narrative is an important part of agency, and that problematic worldviews can, in fact, be rehabilitated through action and speech. Thus, Odysseus's narrative echoes and builds upon the broad foundation introduced earlier, while also integrating some of the specific psychological themes explored through Telemachus. Odysseus is shown as isolated, suffering from a type of paralytic helplessness, and he undergoes a transformation through

action and speech, which may be analogous to treatment.

In this chapter, I will explore this pattern, starting with Odysseus's isolation in Book 5. I suggest that, like Telemachus, Odysseus appears to be in a state of Learned Helplessness, but for somewhat different reasons. Odysseus's return from the edge of the world to Ithaca—the primary plot of Books 5–13—is also a return from a type of defeatist mental state. I argue in the next two chapters that this return is facilitated through a dramatized form of therapy: like his son, Odysseus is partially rehabilitated through a series of actions that help him negotiate his own agency in the world (primarily occurring in Book 5). Odysseus's helplessness, however, derives from different sources from his son's: not only has he suffered many actual setbacks and traumas, but he is also depicted as isolated and depressed. This depiction resonates with modern studies in social isolation and solitary confinement.

A. Alone By the Sea

In the last chapter, I discussed the diagnosis of Learned Helplessness—that state of paralysis that comes from repeated experiences of powerlessness and failure. Even though there is doubt about whether or not LH has effects as broad and deep as some would imagine, the basic concept—that repeated failure and frustration can lead to a pattern of expecting failure and, eventually, an unwillingness or inability to act—is widely accepted and appears reflected in the case of Telemachus. Whether or not LH effects are wholly maladaptive—*not* feeling responsible for a situation can potentially liberate people to engage in new activities without coping with past failure—a state of helplessness can be paralyzing and require some intervention if a person's behavior is to change.[2] Where Telemachus's helplessness comes from repeated frustration and conditioning, Odysseus may be understood as suffering from both repeated and traumatic failure—feelings of helplessness caused and exacerbated by trauma.[3] When Odysseus first appears in the *Odyssey*, he has suffered many setbacks at sea from violence and shipwrecks and he sits weeping on the shore by day, sleeping with Kalypso every night (5.151–59):

> τὸν δ' ἄρ' ἐπ' ἀκτῆς εὗρε καθήμενον· οὐδέ ποτ' ὄσσε
> δακρυόφιν τέρσοντο, κατείβετο δὲ γλυκὺς αἰὼν
> νόστον ὀδυρομένῳ, ἐπεὶ οὐκέτι ἥνδανε νύμφη.
> ἀλλ' ἦ τοι νύκτας μὲν ἰαύεσκεν καὶ ἀνάγκῃ

ἐν σπέεσι γλαφυροῖσι παρ’ οὐκ ἐθέλων ἐθελούσῃ·
ἥματα δ’ ἂμ πέτρῃσι καὶ ἠϊόνεσσι καθίζων
[δάκρυσι καὶ στοναχῇσι καὶ ἄλγεσι θυμὸν ἐρέχθων]
πόντον ἐπ’ ἀτρύγετον δερκέσκετο δάκρυα λείβων.

Kalypso found [Odysseus] sitting on the water’s edge. His eyes were never dry
of tears and his sweet life was draining away as he mourned
over his homecoming, since the goddess was no longer pleasing to him.
But it was true that he stretched out beside her at night by necessity
In her hollow caves, unwilling when she was willing.
By day, however, he sat on the rocks and sands
wracking his heart with tears, groans and grief,
Shedding tears as he gazed upon the barren sea.

To repeat some important concepts from the last chapter: Learned Helplessness (LH) has been linked to many psychopathologies, including depression and anxiety—but these mental states lead as well to behavioral maladaptations—a state of LH can prevent the acquisition of new skills, as well as the execution of old ones. Especially significant: the repeated and uncontrollable failure that is recognized as a feature of LH prevents plan-making and often encourages state rumination (obsessive pondering of past actions and current disappointments) and avoidance coping (e.g., drug use, pleasure-seeking behavior). To me, it is clear that, perhaps even more so than Telemachus, Odysseus fits the description of someone suffering from LH or its analog. He does not or cannot act; he derives little enjoyment from pleasure-seeking activities, even though he still engages in them by necessity (or compulsion: ἀνάγκῃ); and his sense of self—his sweet life—is draining away in the process.

As discussed in the introduction, when Odysseus is here depicted as “mourning over his homecoming [*nostos*],” the homecoming functions as a *metonym* for a return to life and all of its constituent elements. In his first appearance, Odysseus is as far removed from this return as possible. The isolated island of Ogygia itself is important symbolically in several ways. First, the physical aspect likely resonated with ancient audiences, virtually all of whom who lived near the sea and were intimate with the dangers of sea travel. Second, the path along the sea Odysseus has traveled and must traverse again is metaphorically a type of *katabasis*, a journey to and from the land of the dead.[4] So the Odysseus we encounter in the fifth book of

the *Odyssey* is one who is separated physically from other human beings and spiritually from the realm of the living by his placement on Kalypso's island. As a 'paradise,' this island exists outside of the world of experience.[5]

The nature of Odysseus's suffering, moreover, may have had similarly complex receptions among ancient audiences. On a basic narrative level, Odysseus's sorrow is clearly necessary to the plot: it increases his suffering, motivates audience sympathies, and, because it is connected to his family, helps to characterize *this* Odysseus as a man who needs to return home (and will). But the stark contrast between his days and nights and the *root* of his behavior gives me pause. As I mention in the introduction, although the epic makes it clear that Odysseus needs divine sponsorship for his journey, the actions taken to complete it are nearly wholly his own. One might wonder why Odysseus has spent seven years *not* building a raft or trying to escape in some other way.

The interpretive frame, which diagnoses Telemachus's state in Book 1, as one of Learned Helplessness is useful for Odysseus, but with different etiologies. Even if an audience does not consciously wonder what is wrong with Odysseus (in terms of pathology) at the beginning of Book 5, they may empathetically understand the conditions that have made him unlikely to try to act in a hostile world: he has lost everything (including his companions); he has suffered many setbacks, which he attributes to external agents aligned against him; and he has been separated from the company of his own kind for far too long. Where Telemachus's inability to act comes from a lack of models and a limited initiation into adulthood, Odysseus's comes from suffering. Studies in LH make it clear that repeated failures are instrumental in affecting a view of the self as an agent, but we may underestimate the importance of Odysseus's isolation, too. As Allen Thiher argues, heroic isolation may have been a metonym for melancholy or madness, insofar as it constitutes a break with the social world and the community that helps to create our identities (1999:13–14; cf. Shay 2002:247–48).[6] Thiher (1999) traces such a view back to the *Problems* attributed to Aristotle, where heroes like Bellerophon wander because of an admixture of disease and nature (30, 953a). And, as Charles Underwood suggests, there is a correlation between Odysseus' displacement from others and the breakdown in his identity.[7]

In Greek poetry and myth, the negative influence of isolation is explored as well through Philoktetes, who is abandoned by the Achaean coalition on their way to Troy.[8] When the Greeks require his bow—which once belonged to Herakles—to take the city, they return to retrieve it (and

the man). In Sophocles' play on the subject, Philoktetes is clearly a bit off: he is angry, disillusioned, and, as many have suggested, mentally unstable. In recent years, interpreters have seen Philoktetes' maladies as representative of PTSD and other war-related traumas.[9] But he also suffers the negative effects of isolation.

Psychologists have studied the emotional and physical effects of isolation over the past few generations. These studies reinforce important themes of the *Odyssey*, namely that individual identity is composed of social relationships. Modern studies of isolated individuals, moreover, have shown that limited social engagements have deleterious emotional effects including a rise in fear and paranoia and a decrease in self-esteem.[10] As an interwoven complex of responses, it is obvious how these effects can be coterminous with issues associated with LH. But studies in the effects of solitary confinement provide an even starker view. Inmates placed in solitary confinement for long periods (often with only one hour outside a day) have been shown to develop psychopathologies at a markedly increased rate and intensity.[11] (And those who come in with psychological disorders decline even more precipitously).[12] Isolated individuals exhibit external behaviors that become steadily more maladaptive: they self-mutilate at a higher rate, have trouble socializing and reintegrating into the general population, and attempt suicide in higher percentages.[13]

Recent scientific studies appear to confirm, moreover, the most troubling implication of these observations, namely that the maladies that emerge from isolation are not merely psychological, but they are also neurobiological.[14] EEG readings, for example, decrease after just a week of confinement, revealing that the human brain begins to change in these circumstances.[15] Over time, the brain of an isolated person has fewer neural connections and a thinner cerebral cortex. Inmates have difficulties with memory, distorted perceptions of reality, and display a deterioration of language function. Isolation's biological changes affect the very parts of the brain that facilitate social interaction, higher order analytical thinking, and the ability to plan and act in the world. And, as we understand more about the mutual interdependence of human minds, the physical and psychological toll of isolation may become clearer. As discussed in the introduction and the last chapter, our minds do not exist in hermetically sealed bodies—we rely upon input and engagement from other human beings for the operation of higher mental functions. Bereft of such engagement, isolated individuals exhibit a breakdown in language. Although no one has studied this aspect specifically, a breakdown in

language and higher order mental processes would seemingly imply a breakdown in story and a loss of a sense of self.

The ancient Greeks obviously did not have EEG machines nor did they understand neurobiology, but I do suspect that over time many had observed the negative effects of social isolation and that such observations were integrated thematically into the myths of Philoktetes and Odysseus. As mentioned in the last chapter, the two heroes are related in part by a line repeated in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*: in the *Iliad* at 2.721–23, Philoktetes is said to "[lie] there on the island suffering harsh pains / In holy Lemnos where the sons of the Achaeans left him / suffering with an evil wound from a murderous watersnake" (ἀλλ' ὃ μὲν ἐν νήσῳ κεῖτο κρατερ' ἄλγεα πάσχων / Λήμνῳ ἐν ἠγαθέῃ, ὅθι μιν λίπον υἷες Ἀχαιῶν / ἕλκεϊ μοχθίζοντα κακῷ ὀλοόφρονος ὕδρου). Note as well Book 5's description of Odysseus "He lies there on the island suffering harsh pains / In the halls of Kalypso the nymph who holds him / under compulsion. He is not able of returning to his paternal land" (ἀλλ' ὁ μὲν ἐν νήσῳ κεῖται κρατερ' ἄλγεα πάσχων, / νύμφης ἐν μεγάροισι Καλυψοῦς, ἥ μιν ἀνάγκῃ / ἴσχει· ὁ δ' οὐ δύναται ἣν πατρίδα γαῖαν ἱκέσθαι, 5.13–15). Both figures are described as languishing thanks to the actions of others (Philoktetes for the Achaeans and Odysseus for Kalypso respectively), but Philoktetes's suffering is localized in his wound and Odysseus's is communicated through his inability to return home. For the description in the *Odyssey*, a scholiast complains that it ill fits this context and offers a different line instead (as discussed in the previous chapter). But I suspect that the traditional presentation of Philoktetes and Odysseus with the same line is both intentional and effectively subtle in evoking their similar psychological states and, by contrast, the thematically marked nature of Odysseus's suffering. While there has been debate among Homerists about whether or not formulaic echoes are meaningful, I think that it is very likely that repeated uses of phrases in similar contexts would have recalled a system of themes for audiences well versed in epic performance.[16]

Before leaving this similarity, it is worth considering the repeated language once more. Both figures are marked out for their passivity—what is replaced is a very basic type of physical suffering in conjunction with their social isolation. It may also be important that in myth Odysseus retrieves Philoktetes and attempts to reintegrate him (e.g., Sophocles' *Philoktetes*). The two figures are in this way potentially joined in the quality of their suffering. Odysseus is thus marked as an agent who reintegrates—a quality I suspect is immanent—connected to his traditional story of being the one who returns home and is himself reintegrated.

One of the questions that might occur to an audience is how a figure known for his tricks and his plans—one central to so many actions in the mythical traditions set in Troy and his own epic—can suffer from such marked and prolonged inaction. When he finally appears, as I mention in the introduction, Odysseus seems to suffer from anhedonia, a hallmark of depression. Ancient audiences may have understood the causes of his behavior in various ways—whether a malaise from repeated failure or dysfunction emerging from isolation, Odysseus is not functioning as an agent or even a fully-formed person. Like Philoktetes he lacks a social context in which to operate as a human being; deprived of this, he is in many functional ways *not a human being*. Odysseus's mental anguish, moreover, is complicated in turn by his own possible responsibility in bringing himself to Ogygia.

B. Escape from Ogygia

The epic, therefore, has multiple potential motivations in depicting Odysseus's departure from Kalypso's island: the plot needs him to return to Ithaca, but thematically, it also needs to show his transformation during this return. Its depiction of the hero as suffering from something akin to Learned Helplessness contributes to an implied explanation of his complicity in his "exile" and the psychological complexity of his return home. The pattern I sketched out in the previous chapter for Telemachus repeats *mutatis mutandis* throughout the epic's treatment of Odysseus, but in more subtle ways.[17] It is worthwhile to recall the steps (see Table 3.1 below).

Table 3.1. Patterns of agency ascription on the *Telemachy*

(1) A character disavows agency by expressing a resigned "gods are in control" statement
(2) An experienced figure correctively attributes more to human agency
(3) Both figures negotiate between controllable and uncontrollable outcomes
(4) Ideal cooperative aesthetic between man and god
(5) Doubly motivated events with complex causal relations
(6) Divine guarantee of justice in the human realm

The epic presents Odysseus at first in a world that is wholly god-dominated (even if less so than the *Iliad*): Zeus predicts the narrative, namely that Odysseus will come to Skheria, be honored, and return wealthier than when he left for Troy (5.33–42). Then it even sends another god (Hermes) to tell a third divinity (Kalypso) to allow Odysseus to leave and to facilitate his departure. At this point in the narrative, Odysseus's return seems almost completely externally determined, but from the beginning of the book, there is a twist: he must go home "without assistance from gods and men" (οὔτε θεῶν πομπῇ οὔτε θνητῶν ἀνθρώπων, 5.32). Indeed, one way to interpret Odysseus's raft being shattered by Poseidon and his safety guaranteed by Athena is as a tale of divine caprice. And, yet, the story the audience receives is something different.

One of the important results of examining Book 5 closely is discovering how much more complicated it is than I just sketched out. To start, the trials of Telemachus should help audiences to see Odysseus's story differently. The narrative, in turn, emphasizes Odysseus's own efforts and deliberations at key moments during his escape from Ogygia. In this way, the cooperative aesthetic discussed in the last chapter becomes the dominant theme in the book. As I discussed in the Introduction, Odysseus is allowed to go home by the gods, but *he* needs to build his raft on his own, a scene that in part anticipates the rebuilding of the man through the subsequent books (5.160–70 and 228–61). At the beginning of the process, Kalypso plans out the journey for him (καὶ τότ' Ὀδυσσῆϊ μεγαλήτορι μήδετο πομπήν, 233), but during the building of his vessel, the narrative emphasizes his knowledge and skilled craft (ξέσσε δ' ἐπισταμένως, 245; εὖ εἰδὼς τεκτοσυνάων, 250; ὁ δ' εὖ τεχνήσατο καὶ τά, 259). The episode ends with an elegant expression of cooperation: Kalypso sends a favorable wind (οὖρον δὲ προέηκεν ἀπήμονά τε λιαρόν τε), but Odysseus is the one who *knows how* to keep the raft straight on the sea (γηθόσυνος δ' οὔρῳ πέτασ' ἱστία δῖος Ὀδυσσεύς / αὐτὰρ ὁ πηδαλίῳ ἰθύνετο τεχνηέντως 5.268–70). The first step in Odysseus's return from the margin is accomplished through preparatory physical labor; he is not asked to take any risks, but to apply his knowledge in a local context in the accomplishment of a short-range goal. It is tempting to see this step, so necessary for the plot, as also functioning as a type of work therapy: Odysseus begins to recuperate a sense of agency by exerting control over his environment and his actions. Indeed, one step that is critical to manage LH in patients is an "expectancy change."[18] This is a shift in a person's ability to make new causal attributions, to tell a story or

map out a plan that leaves room for personal agency. These practices are not dissimilar to aspects of Cognitive Behavioral therapy (CBT), which uses rehearsals of assumptions, repetitions of past behavior, and modeling of new behavior in an effort to establish new patterns of thought and action with patients.[19] Such a shift in expectation is critical for preparing an individual to make the choice to act to begin with. Odysseus's view of the world and his potential to act in it requires such a shift: he is reconditioned by acting within the world and through his experiences in traveling away from Ogygia.

If this smaller-stakes experimentation is therapeutic, it is also in preparation for the more difficult challenges to come. The nature of Odysseus's suffering *between* Ogygia and Skheria has an important relationship to his previous experiences, his identity, and rehabilitation. The subsequent events both reimagine and replay Odysseus's earlier trials on the sea through the reappearance of Poseidon. The god's appearance initiates a range of defeatist and recuperative moments, which allow the audience to explore the interplay between suffering and agency. Although divine forces are shown acting against Odysseus, the hero's own willingness to act is instrumental in his survival and success. The process, moreover, resonates with studies in Learned Helplessness (see Table 3.2 below). As studies in LH effects have shown, both humans and animals can be trained to strive against helplessness by being "exposed to controllable events ..."[20] The events of the second half of Book 5 unfold as if they were part of a cruel experiment in human resilience. Poseidon attacks and Odysseus wishes he had died at Troy (5.299–312), blaming Zeus (Ζεύς, ἐτάραξε δὲ πόντον ..., 304) and expressing again a fatalistic and foreclosed worldview similar to Telemachus's at the beginning of the epic (νῦν δέ με λευγαλέῳ θανάτῳ εἵμαρτο ἁλῶναι, 312).[21] In the language of LH, this is state rumination, a pensive self-pitying condition where no action is thought possible; accordingly, at this first lament, Odysseus takes no action.[22]

Table 3.2. Odysseus's laments in Book 5[23]

Passage	Situation	Action Type	Outcome
299–312	Onset of Storm	*State Rumination* (wishes he had died at Troy)	Odysseus blames the gods Odysseus's own effort and divine help keeps him alive

356–64	Uncertainty concerning Leukothea's help	*Yielding* the ship, but deciding to swim	Poseidon sends a wave; Leukothea preserves him
[5.394–99]	Simile: Sick Father, healed by gods	Cause and relief attributed to gods	
408–23	Odysseus's own effort and divine help keep him alive	*Deliberation* [narrative says Athena intervenes]	Swimming
465–73	The land is cold and he is naked	*Deliberation* [narrative says Athena intervenes]	Hibernation in the bush and leaves

In the next step, Leukothea intervenes to save him, but he doubts he can trust the gods: the goddess tells him to abandon his vessel (357), he insists he will not yet obey because the land is so far off (ἀλλὰ μάλ' οὔ πω πείσομ', 358), and he comes up with his own plan (ἀλλὰ μάλ' ὧδ' ἔρξω, δοκέει δέ μοι εἶναι ἄριστον, 360).[24] After recognizing that the vessel is lost, he takes the risk and swims (356–64). Again, even though a divinity gives him the idea, his own initiative is required for the action. This echoes the building of the vessel earlier in the book, but requires more than faith and obedience: Odysseus must *act* using the talent for which he is famous (his mind). In deliberating, he both takes control of his situation and reclaims part of his conventional identity. Similarly, after two days of being tossed about, when the winds die down Odysseus is surprised to see land—and his approach to it is limited by steep cliffs and dangerous terrain. While the narrative claims that Athena intervenes, the action shows that Odysseus contemplates the scene, eventually sees the safe passage, and then swims for it (408–23). The formulaic language throughout this section binds the series together and emphasizes a subtle but important change. The same speech-introductory line prefaces each moment of deliberation ("he was deeply troubled then and spoke to his own great heart," ὀχθήσας δ' ἄρα εἶπε πρὸς ὃν μεγαλήτορα θυμόν, 298=355, 407, 464) and each speech starts with a lament:

> ὤ μοι ἐγὼ δειλός, τί νύ μοι μήκιστα γένηται;
> "Oh, I am wretched—what now at last will become of me?" (299)

> ὤ μοι ἐγώ, μή τίς μοι ὑφαίνῃσιν δόλον αὖτε.
> "Oh my—may it not be [some immortal] who weaves a trick against me again." (356)

ὤ μοι, ἐπεὶ δὴ γαῖαν ἀελπέα δῶκεν ἰδέσθαι...
"Oh my—although [he] has granted unhoped land to be seen ..." (408)

ὤ μοι ἐγώ, τί πάθω; τί νύ μοι μήκιστα γένηται;
"Oh my—what will I suffer? What now at last will become of me?" (465)

After his first lament, he is driven, still speaking, by a wave as the raft explodes (313–14). After the last three speeches, however, Odysseus is described as deliberating ("When he was examining these things through his thoughts and his heart," εἶος ὁ ταῦθ' ὥρμαινε κατὰ φρένα καὶ κατὰ θυμόν, 365, 424) and then finally deciding upon action ("And so as he was considering it, the following seemed to be best ... ," ὣς ἄρα οἱ φρονέοντι δοάσσατο κέρδιον εἶναι, 474). The language and the action recall Athena's prediction to Telemachus in Book 1 that Odysseus "will devise how he will come home, since he is a man of many devices!" (φράσσεται ὥς κε νέηται, ἐπεὶ πολυμήχανός ἐστιν, 205). And this series of actions repeats when he washes up on land to find himself cold and naked (5.465–73): he laments, but then makes a decision, takes action, and preserves himself in a pile of leaves.

Again, there is a repeated pattern in Book 5 that uses both formulaic language and thematic elements to bind together the four major steps of Odysseus's calamitous journey from Ogygia to Ithaca. The process, which steadily reduces his advantages and possessions from a raft, to its wreckage, to a life-preserver, to nothing but himself, echoes the story he will later tell about his return from Troy, but with a significant difference. In both cases he suffers at sea and must bear witness to the steady withering of his forces from twelve ships, to one ship, to nothing but himself on wreckage floating in the sea. But where his control over the situation—his agency—steadily decreases in his return from Troy, it appears to *increase* during his departure from Ogygia, even if in very small steps. The significant difference emerges at the end (7.248–57):

ἀλλ' ἐμὲ τὸν δύστηνον ἐφέστιον ἤγαγε δαίμων
οἶον, ἐπεί μοι νῆα θοὴν ἀργῆτι κεραυνῷ
Ζεὺς ἐλάσας ἐκέασσε μέσῳ ἐνὶ οἴνοπι πόντῳ.
ἔνθ' ἄλλοι μὲν πάντες ἀπέφθιθεν ἐσθλοὶ ἑταῖροι,
αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ τρόπιν ἀγκὰς ἑλὼν νεὸς ἀμφιελίσσης
ἐννῆμαρ φερόμην· δεκάτῃ δέ με νυκτὶ μελαίνῃ
νῆσον ἐς Ὠγυγίην πέλασαν θεοί, ἔνθα Καλυψὼ

ναίει ἐϋπλόκαμος, δεινὴ θεός· ἥ με λαβοῦσα
ἐνδυκέως ἐφίλει τε καὶ ἔτρεφεν ἠδὲ ἔφασκε
θήσειν ἀθάνατον καὶ ἀγήραον ἤματα πάντα·

"But a god sent wretched me to your hearth
After Zeus struck my swift ship with a shining bolt
And wrecked it in the middle of the wine-dark sea.
There all my other fine companions perished,
But I grabbed a plank from the upturned ship in my arms
And was carried for nine days. On the tenth, in the black night,
The gods brought me to the island of Ogygia, where Kalypso
The well-tressed, dread goddess, lives. She took me,
Kindly, was loving me, feeding me, and saying that
She wanted to make me immortal and ageless for all days."

Here, Odysseus's narrative provides him a key action in staying alive, while the rest of the actions are executed by divinities. By the end of this passage, Odysseus is kept like a pet or a child and has become the center of another's prospective tale as Kalypso makes plans for his future. In planning to transform him into a deity, Kalypso threatens to strip him of any ability to become an agent (even if at first glance it might seem otherwise), since he would never change and would always be by her side.[25] In his arrival on Skheria, in contrast, Odysseus comes to land by his own initiative.

The events of Book 5, often sped over in anticipation of the hero's arrival in Skheria, present a structure wherein Odysseus transforms back into the much tossed-about man described in the proem. A helpful action by the gods is met with a harmful one (and vice versa), the balance of which leaves Odysseus's initiative as critical in bringing him closer to home: *he* builds the raft, steers his ship, clings to the timber, and swims to safety. Although it is clearly possible to attribute the greater importance to the hand of the gods, the actions required of Odysseus himself are instrumental. They are, furthermore, meaningful psychologically: in Book 5, we find a defeated Odysseus restrained from action by Kalypso, a plot feature which communicates his total loss of agency. The languor inculcated from multiple defeats is briefly counteracted by success and desperation. One way to immunize against the effects of LH is to expose people to events that are within their control, to facilitate successful

execution of decision-making and action.[26] By this process, the epic dramatizes the rebuilding of Odysseus's abilities to cope with the world as part of his process in returning home. When he covers himself on the shore of Skheria, Odysseus is, as many scholars have suggested, re-entering life as something of a newborn.[27] Though this may be pressing the point, researchers have compared the traumatized mind to that of a young child. Suffering makes it necessary to re-learn how to relate to the world and how to understand and communicate what has happened.[28]

In the last two chapters, I have suggested that Zeus's comments at the beginning of the *Odyssey* constitute a programmatic statement addressing one strand of thought in the epic's audiences concerning man's helplessness in the face of fate. The depiction of Telemachus in Book 1 and through his journey in the *Telemachy* dramatizes various responses to such a debate and models an initial rehabilitative approach. The problem —Telemachus's lack of agency—and the treatment I have suggested resonate strongly with modern studies in Learned Helplessness. Just as the structure of the *Telemachy* anticipates the structure of Odysseus's return home (as Cook 2014 makes clear) and makes a certain kind of return possible, so too is the theme of helplessness and the epic's therapeutic response integrated into Odysseus's escape from his Ogygian paralysis. In both, the epic models a shared responsibility—a cooperative aesthetic—between mortals and gods for human failure and success.

Furthermore, just as Telemachus's Learned Helplessness appears to be motivated by social conditions—the absence of a proper group of peers, a mentor-figure, and educational institutions—Odysseus's suffering and psychological strain can be attributed both to his own actions (as I will discuss in the next chapter) and social isolation. It is paramount for the epic that the social theme emerges in both cases. Although we often think of the *Odyssey* as the epic about a single man who returns home, it is also deeply about the communal and social elements that contribute to an individual's identity. Part of the message of what happens after Odysseus comes home is that his return to self and life is incomplete until he is also reunited and reconciled with not just the members of his family who give full meaning to his social roles as father, husband and son, but also with his community, into which he must be reintegrated as a leader. So, although the audiences and singers of Homeric epic would have had little concept of the neurobiological importance of the social and emotional engagements the narrative depicts, Odysseus's story is still deeply sensitive tof the need for these communities and their effect on our sense of selves and our self-worth. In this movement, the *Odyssey* also makes a crucial

assertion about the nature of human life and existence: its depiction of Odysseus claims that social context is so critical to human life that mortality is preferable to immortality in a paradise like Skheria.[29]

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1 See Barker and Christensen 2015.

2 For LH effects in response to uncontrollable situations: Klinger 1975 and Kuhl 1981.

3 See Morris 2015:44, 97.

4 For *katabasis* and the structure of the *Odyssey* see Cook 1995; for sea travel and the theme, see, most recently, Beaulieu 2016:26–36.

5 For the typology of paradise in the *Odyssey*, see Cook 1995:54–55; For Ogygia as representing the wild in contrast with human civilization, see Brockliss 2013, Chapter 5.

6 For isolation as displacement and the need for voice to re-place agency, see Underwood 2018: passim.

7 Underwood 2018:126–28.

8 For Philoktetes and social isolation, see Rose 1976; for intergeneric play between the Homeric epics and Sophocles, see Schein 2006; cf. Austin 2011.

9 See, for example, the work of Brian Doerries with the *Philoctetes Project*, described by Meineck 2010.

10 See especially the narratives provided by Gilmore and Williams 2014:77–103.

11 See Andersen et al. 2000:19.

12 Gilmore and Williams 2014:79: On evaluating the isolated population for previous traumatic experience. Many had already suffered PTSD or GAD (general anxiety disorder).

13 See Kaba et al. 2014:442–47.

14 Gilmore and Williams 2014:94: the brain areas that are largely affected by PTSD are also impacted by social isolation including: hypothalamus, adrenal glands, amygdala, and hippocampus. See Ravindran 2014 for an additional overview of many of the neurological effects.

15 See Gendreau et al. 1972:54 and 57–58; cf. Gilmore and Williams 2014:93.

16 For a recent overview of different ways of reading Homeric references and language, see Barker and Christensen 2019; cf. Bakker 2013 for different levels of traditionality and language.

17 For how Odysseus's journey in Book 5 anticipates the themes and structures of the whole epic, see Marks 2008:36–61.

18 See Mikulincer 1994:112; cf. Seligman 1967.

19 For an overview of cognitive therapy, see Alford and Beck 1997.

20 See Mikulincer 1994:6–7.

21 Here, Odysseus is probably complaining about the gods in general and not Zeus specifically. For the thematic importance of Poseidon's attacks on Odysseus, see Marks 2008:44–47. For engagement between the language of Odysseus's suffering and scenes in the *Iliad* (and how this assures both audience and hero that the story will go on), see Pucci 1987:63–66.

22 For the extent to which internal state rumination causes paralysis in patients, see White 2007:106.

23 For the importance of this sequence as "personified interchange" of an internalized mental process, see Russo and Simon 1968:488; cf. Gill 1996:59, 86–87.

24 For Leukothea as a substitute for Athena contributing to the book's theme of transition from near death to new life, see Nagy 2013, 338–39.

25 For Odysseus as subject to the compulsion of Kalypso's desire, see Zerba 2009:319–20. For an overview of Odysseus' rejection of Kalypso's offer and the structure of the *Odyssey*, see Slatkin 2011, 139-49, where she explains how he has already been to the underworld before making this decision.

26 Mikulincer 1994:6–7.

27 For Odysseus's rebirth, see Van Nortwick 2008:21–23; for how the language of Book 5 anticipates this, see Pucci 1987:44–49; cf. Cook 1992.

28 See Fernyhough 2012:201.

29 I thank Erwin Cook for clarifying this point.

4

ODYSSEUS'S *APOLOGOI* AND NARRATIVE THERAPY

ὀρθῶς δ' Ὀδυσσεύς εἰμ' ἐπώνυμος κακῶν,
πολλοὶ γὰρ ὠδύσαντο δυσμενεῖς ἐμοί

I am called Odysseus for evil deeds correctly:
Many who have been my enemy hate me.

Sophocles, frag. 965

When Alkinoos elicits Odysseus's narrative of his trials at the end of *Odyssey* 8, he asks for a tale of the Trojan War, a fate "the gods fashioned, a ruin they allotted to men to become a song for us and later generations" (8.577–80). His request runs against the theme of Zeus's opening lament, that men blame the gods for their fate but are responsible for worse suffering "beyond their fate." Odysseus then follows Alkinoos in promising to tell "the many pains which the Ouranian gods have given me" (κήδε' ἐπεί μοι πολλὰ δόσαν θεοὶ Οὐρανίωνες, 9.15). But the story he tells navigates in surprising ways between the sentiments of his host and Zeus, developing a complicated picture of his own agency and responsibility.

As Odysseus first assumes the role of the narrator of the *Odyssey* in Book 9, he engages with the outer narrative frame in self-consciously talking about how to begin the tale and in naming himself directly (which I will discuss later). But he also appears to experiment with different orderings of events in order to explore his own responsibility and complicity in the action. In the first tale, which he frames unclearly, he explains that both Kalypso and Kirkē held him back from his homecoming (ἦ μέν μ' αὐτόθ' ἔρυκε Καλυψώ, δῖα θεάων, 9.29; ὣς δ' αὖτως Κίρκη κατερήτυεν ἐν μεγάροισιν, 9.31). He reverses the order of

his experience of the two goddesses by mentioning Kalypso first and then couples them together before he explains his own place in that narrative (9.33–36):

> ἀλλ' ἐμὸν οὔ ποτε θυμὸν ἐνὶ στήθεσσιν ἔπειθεν.
> ὡς οὐδὲν γλύκιον ἧς πατρίδος οὐδὲ τοκήων
> γίνεται, εἴ περ καί τις ἀπόπροθι πίονα οἶκον
> γαίῃ ἐν ἀλλοδαπῇ ναίει ἀπάνευθε τοκήων.
>
> "But she never persuaded the heart in my chest.
> Nothing can be sweeter than your homeland and parents,
> Even if a man lives in a wealthy house far away
> In a foreign land, apart from his parents."

As the audience discovers later, Odysseus is not entirely truthful: his men must ask him to leave Kirkē's house and remind him of his homecoming. Here he anticipates his motivation in a slightly occluded way, as an amorphous desire for home. And the external audience might also sense another disingenuous note since, in his first appearance in Book 5, Odysseus is seen "lamenting his homecoming, since the goddess was *no longer* pleasing to him" (νόστον ὀδυρομένῳ, ἐπεὶ οὐκέτι ἥνδανε νύμφη, 5.153).[1] In addition to mentioning his stay in Ogygia before Aiaia, note as well the syntactic elision: he identifies two goddesses restraining him but collapses the instance into one tale, as a singular "she" failed to move his heart. Even though the Phaeacian audience would most easily understand Kirkē as the subject of that clause, this assertion introduces a dissonance for the external audience who most recently witnessed *Kalypso* failing to persuade him. This short revision of his experiences functions as a marker for the type of story Odysseus will tell and forces us as well to consider how faithful a narrator he is and, in addition, what motivates him to tell a story in a particular way.

Throughout the stories Odysseus offers in Books 9–12, he repeatedly considers themes of agency and control. Telling these tales, I suggest, allows Odysseus to exert control over his story, which is in itself of therapeutic significance. The way Odysseus presents his story may be a reflection of his own attempt to read or interpret his own experiences, even as he tries to direct (or misdirect) the audience's interpretations. In the compressed story with which he begins the tale, summarizing the two goddesses who loved him (9.29–36), Odysseus is in the process of re-arranging his prior experiences to fit the current needs. In this retelling,

Odysseus depicts himself as an agent-hero and opposes the uncontrollable forces of these divine women to his own agency, the power of his heart (*thumos*) that would not submit.[2]

In the previous chapter, I argue that Book 5 characterizes Odysseus as someone incapable of moving to action on his own, since he suffers, as his son does, from depression or the effects of Learned Helplessness. Both figures are in a way traumatized by experience and in need of some intervention or therapeutic repair. I suggested in the last chapter that Odysseus undergoes a type of behavioral therapy as he moves from Ogygia to Skheria. But perhaps this intervention was insufficient because it only treats behavior and action and not the root of his suffering, his view of himself in the world.[3] For me, this is one reason why we witness Odysseus referring to the two goddesses in a compressed contrast with the kind of narrative the external audience receives over the previous few books. Of course, one can object that Odysseus springs into action in Books 5 and 6 without much encouragement. But I hope to show the situation to be far more complex. Odysseus, in the telling of his own tales, may function as a poetic representation of the stages of necessary therapeutic intervention, rather than a clinical record of a patient in treatment.

In this chapter, I will pursue some of the implications of positioning Skheria as a therapeutic context for Homeric psychology in general.[4] I will argue that Odysseus's narrative shares many features with one psychological intervention, the modern counseling approach called Narrative Therapy.[5] After briefly surveying features of Narrative Therapy, I will explore how they might best apply to the *Odyssey* and then turn to an analysis of articulations of agency in Odysseus's tale in Book 9, arguing in part that his exploration of agency and social roles is therapeutic for Odysseus and the audience. In particular, this framework helps us see that Odysseus traces the ultimate responsibility for his suffering back to himself. This narrative adjustment, in addition, makes it possible for Odysseus to finally make it home.[6]

A. Therapeutic Intervention: Storytelling as Narrative Therapy

In the introduction, I discuss the thematic importance of storytelling in the *Odyssey*. Investigations that detail its effects and the epic's metapoetic

concerns have been compelling, but there is more to say about the impact that storytelling in Homer has on its tellers (the internal performers, e.g., Odysseus) and its audiences (both within and without the poem). Frameworks from cognitive science are worth reconsidering briefly because they help demonstrate how fundamental narrative is to our concept of our *selves*. As mentioned earlier, scholars like Mark Turner (e.g., 1996) have argued that storytelling is the foundational mental operation of the human brain. This "program" analogy has a powerful partner in "hardware" as well, since neurobiologists have argued that our brains have developed physically for the encoding, patterning, and retrieving of narrative.[7] Psychologists and cognitive scientists have also shown that the act of hearing and telling stories is essential both to the development of a sense of self through autobiographical memory and to what we call consciousness.[8] In dominating the basic function of our brains, storytelling is, as a result, a primary instrument for creating our personalities. When combined with the feedback loop of social contexts through the process Althusser calls "interpellation," storytelling and social roles are the warp and weave of our individual identities.[9]

In a broad sense, then, stories can be understood as cultural discourse or ideologies. What this means, in addition, is that stories can have both malicious and beneficial effects on our engagement in the world. Just as ideologies and discourse can shape larger cultural trends and behavior, so too can personal narratives regulate individual actions. We are constantly telling stories to ourselves and others in order to make sense of our place in the world—often these stories are distortive but defensive (acting to protect our self-esteem). Becoming a fuller agent requires understanding that the ability to change oneself depends upon the stories we hear and tell about ourselves and the social roles reinforced by communal narratives. Therapists who emphasize a narrative perspective understand that because of our ongoing relationship with storytelling, we are not constant, fixed beings, but instead we can "revise, re-collect and remember" who we are through the act of telling and re-telling our tales.[10] Because these influences form and reinforce what we think is possible, a successful narrative of the self must be able to fit the needs of a new or changing situation flexibly.[11]

Our relationship with narrative, therefore, can be indicative of our overall health. As researchers have shown, the ability to control narrative is often lost during times of emotional and physical crisis. For trauma victims, memory can become fixed and its resultant narratives spin out of their control. The process of revisiting the same details can paralyze a

traumatized mind.[12] As David Morris describes in *The Evil Hours*, telling and retelling the story of trauma is one component of prolonged exposure therapy: it allows patients to engage in the events that cause trauma, to turn the story of their life into a kind of fiction, and to reassert control.[13] While trauma victims are, of course, an extreme example, many of the stories people tell about the world are pathological: they prevent us from acting in line with our aspirations and desires and even at times against our self-interest.

The *Odyssey*, as I suggest in my Introduction, demonstrates a sense of what we now call the "narrative self," that identity constructed through and within our memory and communicated to ourselves and others through the stories we tell.[14] Such a sense emerges in Odysseus's self-narration as well as through the lies he tells about himself once he returns home. From this perspective, Odysseus's moments of self-narration are not mere steps or instruments in the completion of the plot, but they are potentially therapeutic re-tellings of the past that demonstrate the epic's understanding that stories shape an individual's decision-making process and help to reveal his sense of place in the world.

Multiple modern approaches to mental anguish—in addition to prolonged exposure therapy—have explored treating narrative dysfunction through the retelling of tales. A process of questioning and generating new narratives about the self helps trauma victims learn to escape the destructive loops of events past and resolve distortions in memory by focusing on and communicating their stories in different ways.[15] Among these approaches is the poststructuralist Narrative Therapy, which sees individual identity as comprised of multi-tiered systems of personal and cultural discourses.[16] Michael White (2007) emphasizes that some of our parafunctional responses to narratives emerge from the belief that actions are external manifestations of an internal and constant self. Such "internal state psychology," as White terms it, constrains our sense of personal agency and limits how we can act in the future, because our conception of what we can or will do is shaped by the constant self, as internalized from prior actions.[17] This internal state psychology can be analogous for the state of helplessness that consigns some to paralysis and rumination. Of course, it is not always pathological to see our internal self exposed in external actions: in times of success and achievement, it reaffirms positive self-esteem. But when faced with misfortune, an internal state psychology undermines our ability to change.

As discussed in the Introduction, one way to address such a fixed internal state psychology is to attempt to transform it into an intentional

state. An internal state psychology imagines that the story of the self is written and constant, like a type of narrative determinism. Intentional states, in contrast, allow for a rewriting of stories and the plotting of different directions based on new intentions. Practices of Narrative Therapy, accordingly, develop directly from the understanding that we have limited control over the external world but have the power to reclaim agency based on how we conceive of the relationship between ourselves and the world around us.[18]

In order to facilitate such reconsideration, Michael White proposes a practice called "re-authoring conversations" to control old narratives and establish new ones for future action.[19] These conversations reframe life experience and encourage the reconsideration of underemphasized events, such as "achievements under duress; survival skills growing up; and personal qualities left out of their story, such as generosity, ethical stances, and kindness" (Madigan 2010:81).[20] In short, the therapeutic context aims to facilitate the patient's re-interpretation of the past in such a way that he redefines his sense of self, recuperates agency, and can plot a new course for the future.[21]

B. Negotiations of Agency and Reclamation of Self —Retelling His Tale

Reading the *Odyssey* in the light of these studies helps to position Odysseus's *Apologoi*—the stories he tells about himself in Books 9–12—as a therapeutic process by which the hero re-authors his own narrative to negotiate the relationship between divine agency and his own responsibility.[22] This process helps him reclaim his identity and commit to his *nostos*.[23] At the same time, Odysseus's performance invites the audience to consider issues of responsibility and fate in a secondary therapeutic step that better prepares them to reconsider their own lives.[24] Charles Underwood has also recently framed Odysseus's tale as one that uses narrative to revisit trauma in order to re-establish self-control (2018:162–63). And this exploration is not just about the development of a Homeric protagonist; it is also about Homeric audiences. To put it differently, the modern frameworks adduced here help us see the *Apologoi* as an opportunity for Odysseus and his audiences to engage in the epic's thematic reflection on agency through a particular series of test cases. These reflections are neither simple, nor monolithic; in addition, they

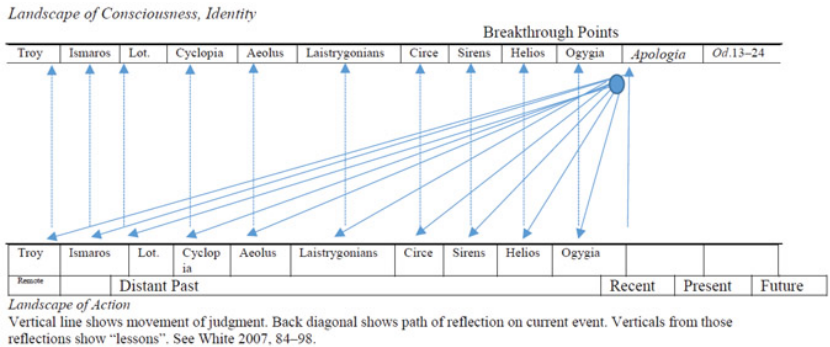
may metonymically represent a process that happens over time in multiple contexts.

To linger on the theme of agency in a therapeutic context for a while longer: the distinctions I have drawn so far in this chapter can facilitate a reconsideration of Zeus's comments at the beginning of the *Odyssey* and Odysseus's return—they encourage us to think of fate not in terms of strict determinism vs. free will but instead as a re-negotiable series of stories. The point here is not whether or not an external force was responsible for earlier misfortune (in Odysseus's case or in general) but that *it does not matter* except that in living with an internal state psychology one can limit future choices and present actions. I would also suggest that the epic makes special effort to prepare us to think of Odysseus in this way by presenting him first in isolation and then depicting him suffering and forced to deliberate and act to survive (as discussed in the last chapter).[25] The second step comes when Odysseus tells his story: he isolates his mistakes and conceptualizes them as part of a causal chain that was ultimately responsible for his suffering.[26] As I will emphasize in the discussion below, rather than being an object of divine wrath and innocent recipient of suffering, Odysseus acknowledges his fault in earlier suffering and regains the agency to influence his return.[27]

The complexity of this transformation is best understood if we imagine Odysseus's narration as the summary product of many stories he has told himself prior to this moment. Narrative Therapy often requires multiple meetings and retellings of the same tales to produce new results. In Odysseus's tale, however, we find what I would like to frame as a composite retelling, complete with hedges and revisions. (And the repetition of re-telling one's story is understood as a therapeutic necessity from some treatment perspectives.[28]) But even this composite can be viewed as a process. The re-authoring of tales prompts speakers to reflect on their past, to isolate prior and perhaps problematic frameworks for agency and action, and in so reframing, to create a new sense of a self that will act in the future.[29] Michael White uses figures to show how in the act of re-telling tales patients move between the landscape of action (the events themselves) and the landscape of consciousness or identity.[30] Figure 4.1 below, adapted from maps representing the reflections and revisions that occur during Narrative Therapy, presents another way of thinking about the relationship between the events and their narrative context in the *Apologoi*. The point of telling marked by the large dot indicates contemporaneity with the narration we hear. The lines in the graph represent Odysseus looking back on the events as they happened in

"reality" (the Landscape of Action) and how they are translated into a sense of his "working self" (the Landscape of Identity). The story he tells the Phaeacians is a result of translation of the previous events into aspects of his identity through the transformative reflection of storytelling.

Figure 4.1



Vertical line shows movement of judgment. Back diagonal shows path of reflection on current event. Verticals from those reflections show "lessons". See White 2007, 84–98.

In this framework, Odysseus's composite retelling provides a series of transformative breakthrough points generated through discrete reflections on his own part on his fate as he moves between different proximities in time. The narrative he provides, moreover, represents a continued weighing of human action and the attribution of blame.[31] In the telling itself, Odysseus presents a neatly constructed tale organized around a series of episodes.[32] Here I imagine each episode functioning analogously to a therapeutic moment. Step by step through these episodes Odysseus's reflection on his past compounds and expands as each successive retelling is reshaped by the one that preceded it. The effect of ordering the events in such a way is to impose teleological meaning on the past by relating it to outcomes in the present. And, to be clear, I think that what Homer is presenting Odysseus as doing is a representation of human mental activity, not necessarily an assertion about the causal relationship of the events.

The separation of these events into episodes gains additional meaning from modern studies in memory and cognition. Such an episodic narrative has implications for how we judge the relationship between the facts of the events and the fidelity of their telling. Cognitive scientists have distinguished between semantic memory—the recall of facts—and episodic memory—the narrative recall of sequences and events.[33] The mental structures responsible for storytelling are identical with those of episodic memory and often operate independent of facts.[34] Episodic

memory is as much, if not more, about making sense of the present as of the past. The process of isolating, judging, and accumulating episodes allows Odysseus to attribute blame and causality in multiple directions in a manner that is coherent with his current needs and beliefs as he stands in front of the Phaeacians and as he both figures how to get home and what to do when he arrives there.

C. Transformation and the Therapeutic Context

So far I have presented some aspects of Narrative Therapy and suggested as well that we view Odysseus's story in Books 9–12 as either the result of his own reflections on his experiences over time or as a composite retelling, a metonym for all of the narrative reimagining that was necessary to provide this final tale. Even if we accept only the weaker suggestion—that audiences would understand Odysseus's performance for the Phaeacians as, in part, a result of years of personal reflection—the therapeutic potential for the retelling remains. And it is further sharpened by the communal context of the performance. From the perspective of the rest of the epic, the act of rehearsing even bad memories is seen as cathartic, as when Eumaios announces that it is pleasurable to recall even terrible grief, after it is over (15.398–402).[35] In this telling, however, Odysseus appears to experience pain before his narrative and distress in telling it; in contrast, when he tells his stories of suffering to Penelope later on in the epic, they both take pleasure (τερπέσθην μύθοισι, πρὸς ἀλλήλους ἐνέποντες, 23.301). At the prior moment, Odysseus has not completed his sufferings and requires a retelling of his tale to regain his journey home. Such a transformative telling dredges up remorse and pain. As mentioned earlier, William H. Race has already emphasized the therapeutic context of the *Apologoi* where "Alcinous and Odysseus conduct themselves like therapist and patient" (2014:48). But during the *Apologoi* the therapeutic effect is both *transactive* (creating bonds between speaker and audience) and *transformative* (active recall makes the memory vulnerable to change). The Phaeacians are Odysseus's audience and his collaborators in witnessing his act of remembrance.[36]

The transformative aspect of this performance—and the perspective to be transformed—may be signaled in Odysseus's introduction to his tale.[37] As mentioned in the Introduction and Chapter 3, Odysseus's particular problem in his first appearance can be framed as a problem of agency: he remained on Ogygia for seven years and only built the raft to leave when

the gods told him to. Narrative Therapy, as briefly summarized above, applies two crucial steps in addressing causality and responsibility: "externalizing conversations" encourage patients to explore problems as separate from identities and to trace restrictive notions of causality, while "re-authoring conversations" reflect upon the intentions and purposes that are often thought to shape events.[38] When Odysseus begins his tale by asking, "what will I relay first and what will I tell last?" he acknowledges the difficulty of organizing any tale, while also signaling a deeper attempt to organize a sequence of events in terms of causality and responsibility.[39] This initial move, in part a response to Alkinoos' opening question, which posited divine causation (how the gods established the fate of the Achaeans at Troy, 8.579–80), covertly arrogates the right to structure a tale to the teller (here the "patient"), while also placing the burden of interpretation on the audience(s), should they wish to question it.

This storytelling situation is by no means a simple one. The context presents a series of motivations for telling the tale: Odysseus needs to entertain his hosts and, it seems, he also must secure their goodwill to receive a trip home. I would like to focus primarily on what the storytelling contexts demand of an individual who may be attempting to craft a coherent and persuasive characterization of himself. One problem Odysseus faces is that the epic presents a conflation of different causal chains: in one, Helios is author of Odysseus's suffering for the death of his companions; in another, Poseidon is responsible for Odysseus's delayed homecoming. At the same time, the epic's external audience has been told that the companions are to blame for their own destruction. (And this audience has also witnessed Odysseus's recent suffering at Poseidon's hands.) Alkinoos' request for a song of the ruin caused by the gods conforms to this recently narrated tale but is dissonant with Zeus's words and the epic's theme of mortal responsibility. The challenge Odysseus faces—and to which the audience must attend as well—is to resolve this dissonance in order to move on from the world he has been inhabiting to his home. The therapeutic consequence of the *Apologoi* cannot be missed: instead of depicting himself as simply the helpless object of divine will, Odysseus eventually isolates a human cause through Teiresias's prophecy: his admittedly mistaken yet ultimately unexplained boasting over the blinding of Polyphemos (discussed below).[40]

Such a therapeutic understanding of the need for telling this tale enriches our appreciation of its structure and meaning.[41] The *Apologoi* begins with a reclamation of identity and proceeds through evaluations of

responsibility. But this identity develops in a process of negotiation between Odysseus and his audience. After Odysseus casts about for a place to start his narrative's plot, he starts by naming himself: "I am Odysseus, the son of Laertes, known to all for his tricks; and my fame reaches even to heaven" (εἴμ' Ὀδυσεὺς Λαερτιάδης, ὃς πᾶσι δόλοισιν / ἀνθρώποισι μέλω, καί μευ κλέος οὐρανὸν ἵκει, 9.19–20). This unique naming is thematically and therapeutically significant: the hero selects a public self, already clearly known to his audience (from the tales of Demodokos), as the starting point of his tale.[42] From a psychoanalytical perspective, this naming is potentially a claiming of identity and a creation of identity through the act of speech. But one thing that is often missed when we discuss this naming is how it engages with what this community already knows about *that* man. Odysseus *needs* a community to perform any type of identity at all; and as one of the final stages of Narrative Therapy instructs, such witnessing is crucial to confirm an identity.[43] And, as Jonathan Shay argues, the communalization of grief is essential for reinte-grating an individual into society: it requires the opportunity for someone to tell a tale and for listeners to fully hear it.[44] So, the identity Odysseus begins with in his narrative draws on, at the very least, Demodokos' versions of his quarrel with Achilles (8.75–82) and the Trojan horse (8.499–520).[45] And the narrative may also signal the audience to imagine Odysseus *thinking* about his past before he tells his stories.[46] As he listens to the tale of the Trojan horse, he melts into tears and is compared to a woman who mourns her lost husband who fell fighting to defend the city (8.523–31). This response prompts Alkinoos to stop Demodokos' singing and invite Odysseus to tell his own story. Each tale that follows emphasizes the destruction Odysseus can bring (to his community or to others through subterfuge). The first story points again to divine agency (invoking Apollo's prophecy and the plans of Zeus). The second tale—which Odysseus actually requests (8.487–98) mentions Athena's aid, and indicates Odysseus's craft and perseverance.

In the first of many contrasts between Odysseus's self-narrative and the epic's overall frame that postpones his naming, Odysseus projects a starting sense of himself as Laertes's son, a tricky man who is famous.[47] Odysseus's declaration of himself channels a heroic identity by emphasizing his patronymic, the land of his origin, and his cleverness. It acknowledges a prior status for this person, a status that, I suggest, the story to follow sets out to adjust. Such naming contrasts as well with the equally famous trick of calling himself "No Man." The recuperation of his identity announced at the onset of his tale followed by its abrasion

entertains different conceptions of a sense of self. And our own responses may vary depending on our experiences of narrative in general: while John Peradotto sees Odysseus's rejection of his name in the Kyklops episode as marking him as a "narrative agent par excellence" (1990:155), others might follow Charles Fernyhough who describes the adoption of being a "nobody" in trauma patients as a sign of a lack of agency and a loss of direction and memory (2012:201).

Odysseus's reclamation of identity is, of course, not just about how he names himself, but it is also concerned deeply with how he characterizes himself through his control of narrative direction and content. From his initial ascription of general responsibility to the gods for his suffering (9.15), Odysseus distinguishes between different types of responsibility and agency. He also controls the tale by bounding it: we do not hear from him the *entire* story of his suffering from his departure to Troy; instead, he starts with his departure *from* Troy. In general, Homerists see this as a reflex of Monro's so-called law, that the *Odyssey* does not retread the *Iliad*'s narrative ground.[48] For the poem's external and internal audiences, the tale Odysseus tells is one that has not been told elsewhere. From a perspective of repeated performance, however, I find this explanation dissatisfying. Over countless performances and different versions of the tales of Odysseus and Troy, why did Odysseus's tale of himself coalesce around this timeline and these specific events? As a thought experiment in engaging with the hero's own confessional, I propose we see this tale as a self-conscious exploration of the problem of when the speaker feels he has lost control of his story. The answer to this last question is that Odysseus starts at a moment when the clash between his identity and the world first produced dissonance: his initial attempt to go from being a warrior to a veteran at home. A lack of agency and self-control plagues the steps between these roles.

The dynamic implied by the mention of Kirkē and Kalypso at the outset of the tale, following his self-naming as "the son of Laertes from Ithaca," projects a certain type of agent in the world who suffers but remains true to some core sense of self. But this expression of agency represents a change even from Odysseus's introduction to his tale when he abruptly announces "Come, I will tell you about my home-coming of many griefs, the journey Zeus hurled upon me as I was returning from Troy" (εἰ δ' ἄγε τοι καὶ νόστον ἐμὸν πολυκηδέ' ἐνίσπω, / ὅν μοι Ζεὺς ἐφέηκεν ἀπὸ Τροίηθεν ἰόντι, 9.37–38). The contrast between deterministic forces is clear and different for the external and internal audiences: for the Phaeacians, he is the object of divine hatred in his

telling; for the external audience, he is dear to Athena and Zeus.

D. Changing His Story: Agency and Responsibility in the Apologetic Episodes

My proposal about both the therapeutic efficacy of Odysseus's tale through the cumulative effect of the episodes gains strength when we look at each stage of his story. Odysseus appears to talk about agency in each episode and with a slowly developing transformation. In the first stop at Ismaros, Odysseus is unambiguous about the concurrence of chance and decision: for example, the wind carried him to the Kikonians, but he sacked the city and killed the men, and he ordered his men to leave, but they refused ("I ordered them, but those great fools did not obey me," ἠνώγεα, τοὶ δὲ μέγα νήπιοι οὐκ ἐπίθοντο, 9.44). In this retelling, Odysseus allows that he did not decide to go to the land of the Kikonians, while he did take an active part in sacking the city. When he reconsiders what happened after, he insists that he ordered his men to leave, but that they were too foolish to know better—the focus significantly falling on the companions' failure to obey because of their foolishness (9.39–44).[49] Although he caps the episode by saying that this was "Zeus's evil fate" for them (κακὴ Διὸς αἶσα, 9.52), he does not assert that the gods actively affected their decisions. Odysseus and his men collaborate here in their destruction, and the statement about "Zeus's evil fate" is a fatalistic reflection rather than an attribution of responsibility

The next scene confirms that we should view such expressions of causal relationships as nuanced and indirect. When they stop at the land of the Lotus-eaters, even though again it is a storm from Zeus that brings them there (9.67–75), Odysseus presents a narrative with a different perspective. Here we find an emphasis on will from Odysseus's perspective, as he claims that one who ate the lotus "was not *willing* to go home ... but *wanted* to stay there ... munching their lotus and forgetting their homecoming" (ἤθελεν οὐδὲ νέεσθαι, 9.95; ἀλλ' αὐτοῦ βούλοντο ... / λωτὸν ἐρεπτόμενοι μενέμεν νόστου τε λαθέσθαι, 9.96–97). This focus on human agency, rather than natural compulsion (the power of the lotus), seems to be really about Odysseus's will. Instead of positing a divine force directing actions, Odysseus himself is the force behind this episode; he overcomes his companions' will to stay by force ("I drove them to the ships as they wept, with force", τοὺς μὲν ἐγὼν ἐπὶ νῆας ἄγον

κλαίοντας ἀνάγκῃ, 9.98).[50] Thus, Odysseus clearly isolates himself as agent. He sent his men to investigate: they were led astray by desire, but he led them away from danger.

Odysseus' isolation of himself as in control of the action creates something of a narrative-agent baseline to help us frame and re-frame the subsequent stories. Although Odysseus attributes some of their suffering to the gods in the first two episodes from his tale, he also articulates well the balance between his responsibility as a leader and his men's obedience. In the contemplation of this dynamic, we can perhaps imagine Odysseus evaluating in advance how to tell the most memorable and thematically important tale of this movement, the events on the island of the Kyklopes.[51] I would also like to imagine—for reasons that will be clear below—that ascriptions of responsibility in this famous episode were debated by audiences or, perhaps a step too far, imagined by audiences to be the content of Odysseus's tearful ruminations during his years of isolation.

But, first, let's focus on the way in which Odysseus tells the tale. While Odysseus ascribes their landing on a strange shore to "some god" (9.142), he also unequivocally states that it was he who made the decision to "test" the men on the Kyklopes' island ("I went to test what kind of people they were there" ἐλθὼν τῶνδ' ἀνδρῶν πειρήσομαι, οἵ τινές εἰσιν, 9.173–74) and that it was his proud heart (9.213–14) that compelled him to ignore the pleas of his men to let well enough alone ("But I did not assent to them, that would have been much better" ἀλλ' ἐγὼ οὐ πιθόμην, —ἦ τ' ἂν πολὺ κέρδιον ἦεν, 9.228). Here we find an inversion of the scene among the Kikonians when his men do not obey him, but without a direct admission of foolishness.[52] In an important contrast with the first few moments in Book 9, Odysseus makes no attempt to attribute his folly to the gods, instead conceding that it would have been better to listen to his men.[53] In this scene, Odysseus centers his resistance to his men as decisive in leading from one event to another: he is an agent in the trouble they all suffer. While his *thumos* resists the persuasion of the goddess, here it prevents him from being persuaded by his men.[54] Odysseus exhibits a consistency of character as he resists persuasion from goddesses and his men—but the result of such resistance is that he goes too far in ignoring his men. One might, perhaps, imagine that in describing himself in this way, Odysseus acknowledges that he cannot claim agency in resisting the goddesses without also accepting blame for ignoring his men. At the very least, the gap between the behavior he describes and the regret with which he frames it indicates a change in

character from the original actor to the narrator of the deeds.

Regret and possible character change may also inform the way he tells the rest of the episode. In his re-telling of his story, Odysseus does not attempt to gain sympathy for himself or to explain away his suffering by attributing it all to the gods. Instead, he credits some divine power for giving them the courage to blind Polyphemos, while still framing the strategy itself as a product of his own planning and his own clever wit (cf. 9.375–430) with an articulation focusing almost entirely on his own agency and mental activity (9.420–24):

αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ βούλευον, ὅπως ὄχ' ἄριστα γένοιτο,
εἴ τιν' ἑταίροισιν θανάτου λύσιν ἠδ' ἐμοὶ αὐτῷ
εὑροίμην· πάντας δὲ δόλους καὶ μῆτιν ὕφαινον,
ὥς τε περὶ ψυχῆς· μέγα γὰρ κακὸν ἐγγύθεν ἦεν.
ἥδε δέ μοι κατὰ θυμὸν ἀρίστη φαίνετο βουλή·

"But *I* [ἐγὼ] was taking council [βούλευον] about how things might turn out best,
To see if *I* might find [εὑροίμην] some escape from death for *me* and
My companions. So *I* was weaving every trick and *mētis*
For the sake of our life: for a great evil was very near.
And this is the plan seemed best *to me* in my heart..."

Here, Odysseus focuses on his own mental activity and the process by which he was responsible for their escape. The passage's repetitions and structure bear the impression of careful thought, if not rehearsal. Although he ignored the better advice of his men, he nevertheless could also rely on himself to rescue them. As anticipated above, Odysseus cannot claim agency—and thereby fame—for his tricks if he does not exercise complete control over his actions. In retelling his tale, he seems to articulate both his credit for his achievements and his responsibility for his failures. Such a clarification is possible only through the comparison of his prior actions, only through the retelling of the tale.

Thus, in his own narrative, Odysseus makes the important therapeutic step of separating external and internal causes of suffering. He moves between different ascriptions of blame, bestowing some on himself. In the retelling, moreover, he also shows clear understanding of where he goes too far and contrasts his earlier actions with his current perspective. But there is an extent to which Odysseus's retrospective emphasis on his own intelligence and his construction of his identity stalls out in the rehearsal

of his most famous stratagem, the claim that his name is *ou-tis*, "no-man" (9.364–67). Odysseus's denial of his name is, in part, a sophisticated and playful literary device, recalling the delay of his naming in *Odyssey* Book 1 and again upon his arrival on Ithaca (as well as the delay in his appearance for so many books). And, as I discuss in the Introduction, *what* Odysseus is called (his epithets) or not (his name) communicates the shifting and uncertain nature of his identity. His exploration of his naming and identity at the beginning of his tale is part confessional and therapeutic, because he is reflecting a process of deciding which Odysseus he wants to be. In telling a story that emphasizes one aspect of his multifaceted identity to the partial exclusion of others, Odysseus explores the limiting effect of an overdetermined sense of self; that is, he takes the audience (and himself) through the dangers of defining a personal story in terms of a single attribute or goal.

Although the anecdote of the "no-man" trick is itself a performance of cleverness, *metis*—both the trick itself and the pun involved in its execution (the variant for "no one," *mē tis*, sounds like *mētis*, here, perhaps "strategic intelligence")—also effects a contrast between the narrating man named and the unnamed agent of the tale. By naming himself at the outset, he has already countered the famous erasure of delaying his name and questioned the import of its fame.[55] When he reacts in rage against Polyphemos, he claims Zeus as the author of his vengeance (9.479) and positions himself as its instrument, while in the story he tells he shows that he is the agent.[56] The contrast recalls the gap often elided by human forms of expression—we attribute things to the gods to distance ourselves from responsibility or culpability. And this is the substance of Zeus's complaint in *Odyssey* 1.

Odysseus continues to contemplate this theme as he brings the episode to a close. At the most critical moment in the tale, Odysseus's men again warn him not to enrage the Kyklops (9.492–501) and he faults his overpowering anger (*thumos*) for not listening to their advice. Note, their emphasis on his will ("Fool, why do you want to make that wild man angry?" σχέτλιε, τίπτ' ἐθέλεις ἐρεθιζέμεν ἄγριον ἄνδρα; 492), echoing his own summary of the Lotus incident; this combines again with an echo of his comments about resisting the goddess, as Odysseus admits "they could not persuade his proud heart" (ἀλλ' οὐ πεῖθον ἐμὸν μεγαλήτορα θυμόν, 500). Once he reveals his name to Polyphemos—possibly an error of pathology or emotion[57]—the Kyklops prays for terrible troubles, leaving to some the possibility that all was divinely ordained (9.532–36).[58] The details of Polyphemos's prayer have great bearing on both the *Apologoi*

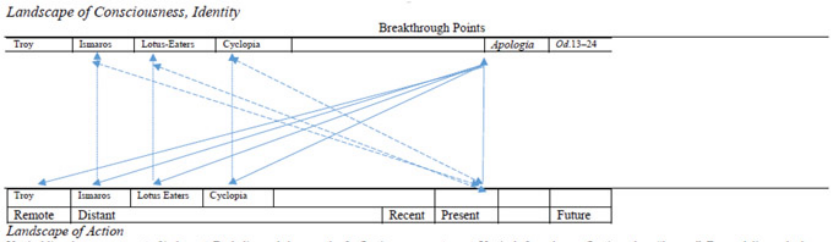
and the epic at large:

> ἀλλ' εἴ οἱ μοῖρ' ἐστὶ φίλους τ' ἰδέειν καὶ ἱκέσθαι
> οἶκον ἐϋκτίμενον καὶ ἑὴν ἐς πατρίδα γαῖαν,
> ὀψὲ κακῶς ἔλθοι, ὀλέσας ἅπο πάντας ἑταίρους,
> νηὸς ἐπ' ἀλλοτρίης, εὕροι δ' ἐν πήματα οἴκῳ.'
> ὣς ἔφατ' εὐχόμενος, τοῦ δ' ἔκλυε κυανοχαίτης.

> "But if it is his fate to see his family again and return
> To his own prosperous home and homeland,
> May he return late, in a bad way, after losing all his companions,
> On someone else's ship. And may he find grief in his household."
> So he spoke in prayer, and Poseidon heeded him.

As Polyphemos's prophecy becomes Odysseus's summary narrative and personal prediction for his audiences, he also provides a system of either/or propositions common to prophetic speech, but which frame the events for the audience in something of a branching causal chain. Here is where correspondence and coherence in memory may be useful categories to consider.[59] Whereas correspondence in memory is a fundamental equivalence between external events and what we say about them, coherence in narrative memory privileges details that add up to a self or situation that "makes sense" at the moment of telling. Given the situation, is it plausible that Odysseus's telling corresponds to Polyphemos's prayer and that he knew *at the time of the event* what Poseidon had in store for him? Or is it more likely that he has developed a story that coheres with the perspective he is articulating, one in which he is asserting his own agency in his suffering? In the latter case, we can observe again how Odysseus uses his tale to establish characteristics for himself. At the same time, he articulates a worldview that is more consonant with Zeus's comments. If Polyphemos is to bear the suffering meted out by Odysseus, then surely Odysseus here accepts that his own behavior attracted the vengeance of Poseidon.[60] Such a process of revision may be represented again in a table based on the work of Michael White, showing the reflective engagement between previous events and the telling of the tale (Fig. 4.2).

Figure 4.2



Vertical line shows movement of judgment. Back diagonal shows path of reflection on current event. Verticals from those reflections show "lessons". Forward diagonals show influence of judgment on formation of present identity (and past identities) and future plans. See White 2007, 84–98.

This table differs from 4.1 in emphasizing the impact of reflections on past events (in the Landscape of Action) on Odysseus's presentation of his character (the Landscape of Identity). In this process, all of Odysseus's comments about the causal—even sequential—nature of the events is retrospective and focused on communicating to him, to the Phaeacians, and to the external audience what kind of person Odysseus thinks he is. At this moment, he has identified his deed in the Landscape of Action on Polyphemos's island as behavior of overpowering anger (in resisting his men) and *hubris* (in boasting over the Kyklops). Such a re-visioning can in turn—and almost without end—reflect back on the way Odysseus "reads" and then communicates the events before and after.

The narrative he provides, of course, is also an invitation to debate. Someone in Odysseus's audiences might disagree, insisting that the gods put him in that position, but Odysseus's story is therapeutic because, by taking responsibility for that first cause of his suffering, he recuperates for himself agency in repairing it and returning home. Odysseus's articulation of his most famous deeds credits their success to his own intellect and his suffering to his arrogance. The gods act as guarantors that the good in him is rewarded (with survival) and the bad (his anger and hubris) justly punished. The therapeutic narrative allows for Odysseus (and his audiences) to re-define and isolate their good qualities, while also clarifying those to be avoided. Such a process, a goal of narrative therapy, contributes to the re-creation of the self.

This kind of argument also contributes to a deeper understanding of the *Odyssey*'s psychological drama. As Rainer Friedrich (1987a) argues from a phil-ological perspective, Odysseus's character in the Polyphemos episode exhibits a tension between the overpowering heart of a hero who wishes to mete out payback for the death of his men and the circumspect man of intelligence (*mētis*) who triumphs by the end of the epic. What we can see from looking at the entire *Apologoi*, moreover, is that the audience should understand that Odysseus is looking back and recognizing this

conflict in character—between visions of different selves—as contributing significantly to his suffering.[61]

Part of the interest of the rest of his tale, which I will cover in brief, is in how Odysseus continues to negotiate cascading and overlapping attributions of responsibility.[62] What makes it additionally therapeutic and inviting to audiences is that Odysseus does not always explain his actions. He even seems, at times, to be uncertain why he did what he did, as if he were not the narrator and the protagonist, but rather a teller of someone else's tale.[63] In the episode of the bag of winds, for example, his companions undermine a supernatural aid due to their greed and curiosity and perhaps to their distrust of Odysseus, who failed to warn them or explain to them.[64] Here we find emphasis on the foolishness of his men ("we were destroyed by their recklessness" αὐτῶν γὰρ ἀπωλόμεθ' ἀφραδίῃσιν, 10.27; and "My companions' evil plan won out" βουλὴ δὲ κακὴ νίκησεν ἑταίρων, 10.46), as Odysseus blames them, even though he fell asleep after nine days at the rudder (10.28–31), and vividly re-imagines their conspiratorial conversation (34–45) before admitting that he considered throwing himself into the sea (49–55). Here, the therapeutic session stalls: Odysseus externalizes the blame, locating it in his men and the arrival of sleep. He is, briefly, a man without agency again. And King Aeolus echoes this powerlessness when he insists that gods hate him (10.70–76).

Odysseus's blaming of his men over the bag of the winds appears somewhat discordant with his projected acceptance of responsibility for his engagement with Polyphemos. This confusion has multiple causes: for Odysseus, as a narrator, the shortcomings of his men may help increase his pity from the Phaeacians. Such a strategy, of course, harmonizes with the epic's overall interest in showing that the companions are responsible for their own loss of homecoming. And, by having Odysseus express some responsibility for his suffering in the Kyklops episode, the epic minimally shows that he is no exception to Zeus's observation that mortals make their own suffering worse than is fated. Indeed, we might imagine a therapeutic movement slowing down since Odysseus has, for better or worse, isolated his mistake with Polyphemos as the efficient cause of his suffering. Modern audiences and internal audiences like the Phaeacians get to observe Odysseus's construction and projection of his character in subsequent episodes.

When they come to the land of the Laistrygonians, eleven of Odysseus's ships pull into a strait to investigate and are destroyed by savages. Though it might have been a simpler tale, he blames no one else

for the loss, not even the gods. He sends three companions in to investigate, then leads away the men who remain.[65] On Kirkē's island, he has some help from Hermes to subdue the sorceress, but then he lingers for a year and his men must pull him out of his torpor (10.466–75). Even here, Odysseus has his men represent the possibility of getting home as the result of the collaboration of man and god: they ask if Odysseus will "remember his paternal land, should it be ordained to be saved and return" (δαιμόνι', ἤδη νῦν μιμνήσκεο πατρίδος αἴης, / εἴ τοι θέσφατόν ἐστι σαωθῆναι καὶ ἱκέσθαι, 10.472–73). Odysseus represents his own will as fallible and essentially human. In the midst of direct conflict—when his men are corrupted by the lotus, or in the cave of the Kyklops—his focus and constancy preserve himself and his men. But when he faces the temptation of looting (among the Kikonians and when gazing on the Kyklops' island) or the comfort of a banquet hall and a warm bed with Kirkē, a similar constancy has less positive effects. Such a complex presentation of the self is, in part, for his audience: it provides them with a realistic explanation for how such a famous man failed to get home and what qualities separate the successful solider at war from the man who gets to come home. This is also a heuristic lesson for Odysseus himself: perhaps we should see him not merely explaining where he has failed, but also reminding himself that he should not give in to comfort and desire and stay at this beautiful table long enough to find another welcoming bed.

In moving sequentially in the tale, Odysseus provides a view of how one might learn not to repeat the same mistakes. To be clear, what I am suggesting is that Odysseus's presentation of the episodes of his journey in a temporal sequence reflects the attempt of a mind to search out causal relationships and agency, but not necessarily that this is the same as the Homeric narrator making assertions about cause and responsibility.[66] In this, I see Odysseus's narration of the events as both a dramatization of cause ascription and an invitation to his audience to engage in a similar process. Tables 4.1 and 4.2, again, help to highlight the ways in which Odysseus as a narrator is looking back in time on his own actions and creating a story for his audience that may reflect different notions of responsibility shaped by the reading of the "Landscape of Action" back from the "Landscape of Identity." To add another dimension from this, we should be considering the motivations of the Homeric narrator and Odysseus as a narrator from another plane, which we might call the "Landscape of Representation" (or perhaps, discourse).

So, let's reconsider how the events are represented. Before Odysseus

starts his narrative in full, he summarizes his years with Kalypso and Kirkē (as I mentioned at the outset of this chapter) in a narrative sequence that reverses the temporal order of the story he tells, in which he ends up on Kalypso's island after first being on Kirkē's, but that repeats the experience of the external audience, who encounter Kalypso before the tale of Kirkē. In referring to these goddesses, he anticipates the outcome of the tale he is about to tell and a thematically similar story within that sequence. More importantly, he collapses the nature of these different experiences into one character in his response: neither goddess, he says, persuaded his heart. The external audience knows that Kalypso once was pleasing to Odysseus (5.153) and both the internal audience and external audience are about to learn that Odysseus had to be convinced by his men to leave Kirkē's presence. So, just as Odysseus ventures forward with his story, beginning with the goddesses who detained him, only to backtrack and restart the tale, so too he offers one account of his own culpability, only to depict subsequent episodes in contrasting ways. But he re-emphasizes the main theme when he presents Teiresias's prophesies. Odysseus's situation as framed by Teiresias is a result of divine anger, motivated by Odysseus's blinding of Polyphemos.[67] The trouble that impacts his family is also connected to this conditional—to summarize Teiresias' words: if you harm the cattle, your men and ship are doomed and if you actually survive after this, you will come home only after losing your companions on a foreign ship (11.105–7). Odysseus (through his recitation of Teiresias's prophecy) thus preserves the balance between divine and human agencies, but also connects the causal chain to his own actions and, in particular, to his blinding of and boasting over the Kyklops, which he has already characterized as his own, unmediated deed. Further, he offers an implicit proleptic frame for the rest of the epic: careful reading of Teiresias's narrative and the timeline of the suitors' arrival in Ithaca reveals that had Odysseus not been detained, he would have made it home *before* any disruption to his household and trouble for his family. Odysseus would have not been detained if his men had not eaten the cattle of the sun. He and his men may not have even been in that position, had he not earned Poseidon's rage. In this way, even the advent of the suitors can be traced to his mistake, even if the sequence of events is unclear enough to allow for many different interpretations. But he also distances and thus authorizes this further by putting this causal chain in its fullest expression in the mouth of the seer Teiresias (should the audiences—Phaeacian and external—have failed to see the connections earlier). Such a reading, of course, opens up the possibility that Odysseus

is not necessarily repeating Teiresias's prophecy faithfully. To be fair, we have only him to trust for it.

After he returns from the Nekyia, Odysseus's tale takes a more restrictive turn and features a steady decrease in agency and freedom of will. While the gods do not make Odysseus listen to the Sirens, he chooses to and must cede agency to his men, however briefly.[68] The choice of Skylla and Charybdis, when Odysseus selectively follows Kirkē's advice in what we might consider as a vain protest against his limited sense of agency, also represents well the limited significance of choice and free will in some situations. And the final episode in the tale, the one anticipated by the proem, features Odysseus's men making what some might call rational decisions in exercising their will (stopping on an island to rest; slaughtering the cattle and making sacrifices to the gods) with sometimes insufficient advice from their leader: Odysseus, although he has been warned of the consequences, is incapable of convincing his men to listen to his advice.[69] While it is customary to criticize the lack of obedience in his men, the series of events looped together may represent an attempt on Odysseus's part to free them of some blame: his companions obey him to *not* obey him concerning the Sirens and yet he acts strangely; they follow him through Skylla and Charybdis and watch their companions die, which is still a defensible decision by Odysseus to sacrifice a few to save many. Then, finally, they prevail upon him to stop on Thrinakia and obey him for a month—and little good seems to come from it.

The overall narrative emphasis on agency paints a picture in accord with Zeus's comments: mortals act in such a way that makes their own suffering worse than it had to be. But it also communicates the corollary that actions with the gods' favor willingly taken meet with greater success. In both cases, humans are free to make mistakes or win success.[70] The ultimate conceit is of a narrative in the process of making sense of the world's causal exigencies. Odysseus's tale charts a path through his past that lays some things at the gods' feet but puts a considerable burden on human decision and action, especially his own. The fatal scene becomes the result of a conspiracy of mistrust, mistakes, and divinely mandated consequences. But the telling also makes us rethink the proem's anticipation of the tale (1.6–9):

> ἀλλ' οὐδ' ὧς ἑτάρους ἐρρύσατο, ἱέμενός περ·
> αὐτῶν γὰρ σφετέρῃσιν ἀτασθαλίῃσιν ὄλοντο,
> νήπιοι, οἳ κατὰ βοῦς Ὑπερίονος Ἠελίοιο

ἤσθιον· αὐτὰρ ὁ τοῖσιν ἀφείλετο νόστιμον ἦμαρ.

But not even so did he save his companions, though he longed to,
For they perished because of their own recklessness,
The fools who ate up the cattle of Hyperion's son Helios.
He deprived them of their homecoming day.

The beginning of the epic primes the audience to look for how Odysseus's companions perish for a very specific reason; and it shows how Odysseus tried to act against their suffering but failed. Zeus's complaint about mortal *atasthalia* and suffering in excess of fate and his version of the story of Aigisthos reinforces this basic world view. But in his telling of the events leading up to the critical moment of his companions' excess, Odysseus reflects on the complicated series of events that put them on Helios's island to begin with. In this contemplation, Odysseus ruminates on that species of inability—of a lack of agency—which left him both stranded for so long on Ogygia and which left him as incapable of rescuing his companions *even though he wanted to* (ἱέμενός περ). By accepting some implicit blame, he stops being simply the victim who fails to save his men. Instead, he accepts his role as someone whose own actions contribute to his men's failure and enact a justified divine vengeance following his boasting over the Kyklops. Odysseus's therapeutic narrative re-charts his journey as one where victim and victor can co-exist in one body, one tale.[71]

The Narrative Therapy perspective introduced in this chapter adds a third step to the process of externalizing and re-authoring conversations—namely, "re-membering conversations" that allow people to revise the construction of their identity with respect to the "significant figures and identities of a person's past, present, and projected future" (White 2007:129). This process recognizes that our identities are not completely autonomous objects, but, rather, that they consist of the people we know and the discourses that traverse among us. Odysseus's transformation, as I will discuss in subsequent chapters, continues throughout the epic and it remains, at some level, therapeutic.

In this chapter, I have offered readings of parts of Odysseus's own narrative as a therapeutic retelling, emphasizing the nature of his concerns and the context of the tale. The *Apologoi* provide an opportunity for Odysseus to revise his own conception of his identity in the way he names

himself and the way he attributes responsibility for his actions and those of others. The complex series of ascriptions in his tales does not merely confirm the interdependence of human and divine causality explored in Chapters 2 and 3, but it also shows Odysseus attempting to explain (and perhaps understand) how he is, in fact, responsible for his own suffering. This reading of the epic positions Odysseus as culpable even for the suffering of his family: in tracing causality and agency through the events of his own story, Odysseus isolates where he made mistakes and where others did and through this process regains the agency he has lost. Indeed, some studies have noted that an attempt to put terrible events into a causal sequence is a common response to trauma, as the human mind attempts to make sense of a disrupted world.[72] This process, if therapeutic, is not merely about ascribing responsibility or guilt, but instead about figuring out how one operates in a complex world. And such a process of recuperation is a prerequisite for Odysseus's completion of his *nostos* literally and psychologically.

The theme of responsibility, of course, is not only about or only for Odysseus. The patterns outlined in the *Apologoi* repeat in the epic's second half, where we find similar negotiations of external and internal motivations in the reflections of his household members (family and servants) and even the suitors, whose doom is fast approaching. Odysseus's tale has not given the impression that his suffering is only his fault, but rather it has established tension for anyone making a claim of total or partial human causality. At the same time, the *Apologoi*, and the epic's tale that follows, set up a therapeutic process that is incomplete. And just as Odysseus's rehabilitation continues, so too will the audience's engagement with questions about his behavior in his return to life.[73] The examination of agency, then, prepares the audience to read the homecoming with its bloody vengeance and the abrupt end of the amnesty in Book 24.

In the first part of this chapter, I mentioned the difference between internal state and intentional state frameworks for understanding human actions. The essential idea of the internal state concept is that human beings are constant, nearly stock, figures whose actions are tied to fundamental aspects of their character. The intentional state understanding posits that we are entities always in flux with the *potential* to chart new courses for our lives and identities. Such a formulation is especially appropriate to the character of *polutropos* Odysseus, that hero of many turns of mind and destination. The epic offers him up as a man capable of changing himself and his surroundings; and this depiction is

consonant with Zeus's implied characterization of human beings at the beginning of the epic—for, logically, if mortals can act foolishly to make their suffering worse than it was fated to be, can they also not work intelligently to make it better? In large part, this theme also conveys an admonition about the danger and potential benefits of applying the narratives from epic (and myth) as paradigms to life. Instead, the epic's psychological lessons emphasize the process of claiming agency and the ways in which it is possible to take control of the tale.

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1 Many of the arguments in this chapter appear in Christensen 2018a. For Odysseus's duplicity and its connection to his characterization as a singer, see Kelly 2008:181–82; against, Cook 2014. For the *Odyssey*'s internal audiences, see Doherty 1995: 17–19 and 73–131; cf. Peradotto 1990:117–18, who sees invited identification with Telemachus, and Martin 1993 for Telemachus' reflecting the historical audience; cf. Murnaghan 2002:139.

2 For *thumos* as embracing intellectual and emotional functions and functioning as an organ of "willing acts," see Zielínski 1922:27–32.

3 See Fernyhough 2012:181–85 for PTSD as a disorder of memory.

4 See Race 2014; cf. Arvanitakis 2015:38, who sees the Phaeacian episode "as a metaphor of what really goes on" in psychotherapy. For Odysseus's act of narration pointing not to the Phaeacians but to the external audience, see Wyatt 1989:256–57; cf. Pucci 1998:146–47.

5 In addition to Race's work, this approach is significantly influenced by Cook 1995:49–60, especially.

6 Arvanitakis (2015:43) puts this a little more strongly: the entire time in Skheria is for him "a paradigm of the emergence and development of the psyche."

7 See the Introduction; cf. Le Hunte and Golembiewski 2014:73: Gottschall 2012:26–31. Churchland (2013:204–5) argues against the proposal (e.g., Dennett 1995) that language makes consciousness possible; cf. Panksepp 2010.

8 See Wilson 2014; and see Gottschall 2012:96–103, who builds on the groundbreaking work of Gazzaniga and Ledoux 1978; cf. Gazzaniga 2012 and Ledoux 2015. See also Parry and Doan 1994:23.

9 For "interpellation" and the contribution of community to the creation of identity, see the Introduction; cf. Althusser 1971.

10 Human beings are not static but instead, "... a matter of constant contradiction, change, and ongoing struggle," Drewery and Winslade 1997:38. See Epston and White 1992:30–33 for the "multistoried nature" of human life and the ways in which people retell narratives to create a personal text that can be both constructive and destructive.

11 For how stories both "restrain and liberate our loves," see Madigan 2010:29–30; cf. Drewery and Winslade 1997:33–34. For the cognitive perspective, see Gottschall 2012:60–67.

12 See Fernyhough, 2012:181–85.

13 See Morris 2015:169–83 for a patient's perspective on prolonged exposure therapy. For a clinician's perspective, see Foa and Hembree 2007 and Foa and Rothbaum 2001.

14 See LeDoux 2002:20 and Chapter 2 for a discussion of the ongoing debate between philosophical and neurological definitions of the self; cf. Dennett 1991; Neisser and Fivush 1994. For trauma as challenging the narrative of the self, see Morris 2015:32–35.

15 Trauma therapy is about re-integrating the parts of the memory into a coherent whole: Fernyhough, 2012:199; cf. Madigan 2010:65.

16 For the various influences on practitioners of narrative therapy, including cybernetics theory, postmodernism, and the work of Michael White, see Freedman and Coombs 1996:6–18; cf. Parry and Doan 1994:1–11.

17 White 2007 draws on Bruner 1986:35–36 for this term; cf. Drewery and Winslade 1997:38.

18 See Drewery and Winslade 1997:36–41.

19 See Chapter 1 on Madigan 2010 and Monk 1997. For Odysseus as re-establishing agency through control over narrative, see Underwood 2018:120–26.

20 For the therapeutic goal of developing "more satisfying interpretations by bringing forth stories that are more congruent with the lives they intend to live," see Parry and Doan 1994:30; cf. Morris 2015:248 for reassembling a narrative as "the ultimate act of healing."

21 For the impact of externalizing problems on a sense of responsibility, see White 2011:118–20.

22 Michelle Zerba has emphasized that Odysseus's tale is "defined ... by its subjectivity" (2009:315) and is invested in the hero's own self-interest. On Odysseus's own subjectivity from a narratological perspective, see de Jong 2001:223–26. On Odysseus's self-interest, see also Segal 1994:85–109 and Olson 1995:1–17.

23 The term *apologos* is more common; I use the plural *Apologoi* to indicate their multiple nature and likely origin in retellings. On the *Apologoi* in general, see Wyatt 1989; Most 1989; Pucci 1998:145–47; Zerba 2009. On its structure and importance for his homecoming see: Frame 1978:34–73; Most 1989; Olson 1995:43–64; de Jong 2001:149–51. On the truth of the events described therein, see Parry 1994; Richardson 1996; Saïd 2011:151.

24 For the importance of "evaluative information" and the way that Homeric poetry encourages audiences to consider and judge its contents, see Minchin 2001:123–24.

25 Cf. Race 2014:48 for Odysseus's "depressed state." Race compares this journey to "the terrifying, lonely period of coming off a long addiction" (2014:48).

26 In this, I am again influenced by Cook 1995 and his analysis of the structure and events of the *Apologoi*; see especially 65–80.

27 Cf. Race's assertion that Odysseus's narrative is "full of his own blunders" (2014:58). For Segal (1994:19) Odysseus's tale is a synthesis, "remembered experience, inwardly formed and trans-muted." For storytelling as self-creation in the *Odyssey*, see Van Nortwick 2008:71–73, as well as 80–81 for narrative as an act of "existential agency." For Odysseus's tales as demonstrations of narrative control, see Peradotto 1990:170 and Clayton 2004:59–60.

28 For repetition in Prolonged Exposure Therapy, see Morris 2015:181.

29 Austin (1975:139) anticipates this claim: "[In the *Odyssey*] remembering comes close to making a plan for the future. Since memory is so much part of what a man is for Homer, the properties of the lotus and Kirkē's drug, which cause forgetfulness of home or of the return home, are really statements on the dissolution of identity."

30 For these distinctions see White 2007, *passim* and Bruner 1986:11–16.

31 Shay (2002:80) characterizes this as guilt. As Fenik (1974:215) argues, the guilt attributed to the crew and to Odysseus himself will vary for "every reader," just as it varies in presentation. Pucci emphasizes the "humiliating and exhilarating narrative of his losses" (1998:142).

32 For episodic memory and Homer, see Minchin 2001:33–34. Epston and White (1992:34) note how in therapy sessions people often link episodes in sequences (with or without actual correspondence to events) based on theme or selected plot. On narrative and episodic memory, see Fernyhough 2012:12.

33 See Rubin 2006 for these distinctions; cf. also my discussion at the beginning of Chapter 5.

34 See Fernyhough 2012:239–47.

35 See Shay 2002:39 on the therapeutic connection between pleasure and pain.

36 For the therapeutic importance of audience as the "co-creative" character of "preferred tales," see Monk 1997:20–21; cf. Drewery and Winslade 1997:35; cf. White 2011:129–31. For Odysseus's act of narration pointing to the external audience, see Wyatt 1989:256–57; cf. Pucci 1998:146–47.

37 Harden and Kelly 201416n.36: "The proemic nature of this passage is obvious"; Cf. de Jong 2001:227–29. For Odysseus's depiction as an epic singer, see Beck 2005; and Kelly 2008:178–82; cf. Beck 2012.

38 See White 2007:9–27 for externalizing conversations; cf. Drewery and Winslade 1997:44–46 for externalizing conversations as a type of deconstruction; cf. Parry and Doan 1994:42–43. Re-authoring conversations have themes that "often reflect loss, failure, incompetence, hopelessness or futility" (White 2007:61).

39 τί πρῶτόν τοι ἔπειτα, τί δ' ὑστάτιον καταλέξω; / κήδε' ἐπεί μοι πολλὰ δόσαν θεοὶ Οὐρανίωνες. Schol. T ad Hom. *Od*. 9.14-15 ex 1–12 suggests that this beginning helps to create a sense of suspense and expectation in the audience.

40 For the conflated divine rages, see Austin 1975:136–38; Segal describes the discrepancy between the "morality of Zeus" and the "vindictiveness of Poseidon and Helios" (1994:185). Fenik (1974:208–12) notes that the rage of both gods is ultimately given mortal origins. For the overlapping plans of Zeus and Poseidon in Thrinakia, see Bakker 2013:124–29; cf. Marks 2008:4245 for a different perspective.

41 For the structure of the *Apologoi* and earlier bibliography, see Most 1989:22–23. Against earlier analyses, Most breaks the *apologia* into two groups of five rather than three groups of three; see Saïd 2011:157–58; cf. Reinhardt 1996:72–73.

42 Pucci describes Odysseus's self-naming as "formally unique" (1998:136) and traces out the dynamic between persona and narrator in this preface (1998:135–40). For the naming's psychological ramifications, see Arvanitakis 2015:40.

43 Cf. Shay 2002 for the communal nature of grief as a type of therapy.

44 Shay (2002:175) explores the communal aspect of sharing grief in recovery and the essential reacquisition of "social trust" which requires "at least three people"; and cf. 34–35 on the communalization of trauma; cf. Morris 2015:49–51.

45 Arvanitakis, following Mattes 1958, suggests that Odysseus cannot claim his name before the stories are told because the stories, in part, make him into Odysseus (2015:43).

46 For this moment as one of introspection, indicating that Odysseus is feeling sympathy with the Trojans, see Rutherford 1986:155–56; for the suggestion that his tears come from Odysseus' internal comparison between who he is and who he used to be, see Grethlein 2017:96–97. Thanks to Deborah Beck for sharing unpublished work on this simile with me.

47 Deferring the naming of Odysseus is a well-known motif of the *Odyssey*: the epic waits until line 21 to name him, cf. Peradotto 1990:115; Higbie 1995:170–75; Kahane 1994:59–67; and Rose 2012:147. He lands in Skheria in Book 6 and names himself in Book 9; he lands on Ithaca in Book 13 and names himself to his son in Book 16.

48 The earliest articulation of this is in Monro 1901:325, where he notes that "the *Odyssey* never repeats or refers to any incident related in the *Iliad*." Nagy (1999:20–21) suggests that it may be a convention of the *Odyssey* tradition to "veer away from the Iliadic" but this does not countermand the epics' complementarity; cf. Pucci 1987:17–18.

49 For Odysseus's telling of this episode as exculpatory, see Pucci 1998:150–51.

50 For the ways in which the language of the passage indicates that the lotus renders Odysseus's men as less than human, see Cook 1995:57.

51 For Odysseus's fault in the Kyklops episodes, see Friedrich 1991; Shay 2002:46–50; Bakker 2013:123; and Olson 1995:209; *contra*: Lloyd-Jones (1971:29), who argues that blinding the Kyklops is not a crime "in the eyes of Zeus and justice"; and Adkins (1960:63) who suggests that Odysseus must act so to survive; cf. Cook 1995. For Odysseus putting himself in bad light in the Cyclops episode, see Underwood 2018:145–50. For the plot of the *Odyssey* depending on the blinding of the Cyclops, see Buchan 2004:18-20.

52 Odysseus allows Eurylokhos to attribute *atasthalia* to him in a different episode, 10.431–37; cf. Friedrich 1991.

53 For Shay (2002:46–50), "Odysseus is determined to reclaim his warrior identity ... with disastrous consequences for his people" (50). Shay does not, however, take note of the analeptic nature of the narrative—he treats it as if it is the main action in the narrative and not one reflecting upon prior events and preparing for the later ones.

54 Churchland (2012:169–71) argues that "self-control and being smart are achievements of the neocortex and how it interweaves with the ancient subcortical structures."

55 On the punning in this passage, see Pucci 1998:126–28.

56 See Bakker 2013:114 for Odysseus's presentation of himself as an instrument of Zeus' revenge during the *mnesterophonia*; cf. Allan 2006:24–25; and Fenik 1974:216–17.

57 Allan 2006:22: Odysseus's "own mistakes have endangered those around him, and ... his men are caught up in the curse laid upon their return by the Cyclops." Shay 2002 prefers the pathological interpretation.

58 For Polyphemos's prayer as a prophecy, see Bakker 2013:118–22.

59 Correspondence is correlation to the facts of events; coherence is a force that conditions memories to be consistent with beliefs about reality and the self; See Conway 2005; cf. Fernyhough 2012:11–13; and see Chapter 5.

60 Dietrich 1965:220: "In blinding the son of Poseidon, Odysseus gives a motive to the god for retarding his return, just as his companions' offence against Helios on the island of Thrinakia ... is the cause of his miserable condition when he reaches Scheria."

61 See Friedrich 1987a for a survey of earlier arguments asserting multiple authorship or textual problems.

62 Segal 1994:217: Odysseus moves as from "a model of wrathful retaliation to one of personal responsibility and to an at least partially defined moral causality."

63 Pucci describes it as "particularly disquieting that Odysseus cannot always explain why the plot-agent acts as he acts" (1998:147).

64 See Shay (2002:51–53) for Odysseus's lack of disclosure as evidence of trauma and poor leadership.

65 Shay wants to blame Odysseus for the failure at the fjord (2002:60–64).

66 See Morris (2015:200) for Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT) and how patients learn to identify and articulate problems with causality and consequences in their personal narratives.

67 See the Conclusion for more on Teiresias' prophecy.

68 Shay (2002:87–88) frames the Sirens as a metaphor for how veterans want to have perfect knowledge of the events in which they take part.

69 For Zeus's rejection of the sacrifice at Thrinakia because of Odysseus's *hubris*, see Friedrich 1991. For skepticism on Odysseus's nap, see Ahl and Roisman 1996:150–51; cf. Segal 1994:216 with previous bibliography. On theological problems in the Thrinacian episode, see Bakker 2013:116–17; cf. Clay 1983:218–20; Friedrich 1987b (who argues that this is *atasthalia*); and Danek 1998:261–65. Shay (2002:100) complains that Odysseus never explains the prophecy to his men (even though Odysseus is shown to do so).

70 Fenik emphasizes that neither Odysseus nor the sailors can blame divine causes (1974:222); cf. Friedrich (1987b:389–93) for a discussion of the crew's transgressions.

71 For the Greek hero as a recipient and cause of suffering and this theme to the *Odyssey*, see Cook 1999.

72 See Morris (1995:30–31) for how *apophenia* (an excessive attempt to make sense of events) can follow trauma and even prompt someone to make false connections and patterns.

73 For *nostos* as indicating a "return to life and light," see the Introduction, n. 2.

5

Odysseus's Lies

Correspondence, Coherence, and the Narrative Agent

καὶ τάχα μὲν οὐκ ἀληθῶς, πάντως δὲ λυσιτελῶς καὶ συμφερόντως ᾄδεται

This is perhaps not sung truly, but it is completely profitable and advantageous.

Philo, *de Somn.* 1.233

In the last chapter, I discussed the importance of Odysseus telling his own story to develop a version of himself with a sufficient sense of agency to complete the trip home. I argued that the perspective of Narrative Therapy helps us understand how such a process might work. One tale we could tell about the *Odyssey* expands on this theme, exploring how Odysseus must exchange stories to confirm his identity in the epic's second half, before he is fully reintegrated as a self and also reintegrated into his community. But Odysseus's use of storytelling is not so simple and straightforward: his lies in the book's second half far outnumber the signs and tales that confirm his identity at first glance. How do these tales fit in to his characterization? What do they tell us about the Homeric understanding of the human mind?

Some answers to these questions reside in the epic's continuing interest in exploring Odysseus's rehabilitation as an agent. In Book 13, Odysseus wakes and at first is confused, even despondent, about where he is. He thinks that he has been swindled and that his homecoming has been delayed yet again. When he encounters Athena, he tries to deceive her, and eventually receives instructions that map out the action for the rest of the epic. Among the structural and thematic repetitions that impact

the interpretation of this scene, the narrative's emphasis on Athena's agency in arranging Odysseus's disguise as a prelude to his punishment of the suitors recalls her tutelage of Telemachus. And the subsequent thematic emphasis on Odysseus's control and mastery of language echoes and advances the patterns I isolated in discussing Telemachus's maturation and education in Chapter 2. At the same time, Odysseus's confusion echoes his initial waking on Skheria in Book 6, just as his words about the land also recall his arrival on Polyphemos's island in Book 9, but with a different valence. The connection between topography and identity, furthermore, looks forward to the epic's final book where Odysseus tours his ancestral orchards and recites to his father the story of their family tree(s).

Among all these familiar themes, however, a brief confusion of identities provides a slightly different reflection on how we know who we are (13.187–96):

> ... ὁ δ' ἔγρετο δῖος Ὀδυσσεὺς
> εὕδων ἐν γαίῃ πατρωΐῃ, οὐδέ μιν ἔγνω,
> ἤδη δὴν ἀπεών· περὶ γὰρ θεὸς ἠέρα χεῦε
> Παλλὰς Ἀθηναίη, κούρη Διός, ὄφρα μιν αὐτὸν
> ἄγνωστον τεύξειεν ἕκαστά τε μυθήσαιτο,
> μή μιν πρὶν ἄλοχος γνοίη ἀστοί τε φίλοι τε,
> πρὶν πᾶσαν μνηστῆρας ὑπερβασίην ἀποτεῖσαι.
> τοὔνεκ' ἄρ' ἀλλοειδέα φαινέσκετο πάντα ἄνακτι,
> ἀτραπιτοί τε διηνεκέες λιμένες τε πάνορμοι
> πέτραι τ' ἠλίβατοι καὶ δένδρεα τηλεθάοντα.
>
> Then brilliant Odysseus was waking up
> After sleeping in his paternal land, but he did not recognize it,
> Since he had already been away a long time now.
> For the goddess poured mist around him,
> Pallas Athena, Zeus's daughter, so that she might make him
> Unknown and she might advise him on each thing
> That his wife, and townspeople and friends might not know him
> Before he pays back the suitors for every transgression.
> Because of this, everything seemed foreign to the lord,
> The winding and winding paths, the harbors safe for ships,
> The steep cliffs and the flourishing trees.

Odysseus does not recognize the land, just as *he* will not be recognized by

his wife, fellow-citizens, and household members. Such a rumination on the reciprocal status of identity forces us to consider the challenge of alleging that something that transforms can be said to be the same.[1] Part of what the epic explores is that what creates identity in this paradox is both continuity and coherence of story. For something to be recognized as *the same*, it must exhibit qualities in its iterations that correspond to one another. But these correspondences cannot be mere coincidences; they must make sense in a narrative context. They need to be acknowledged as in some way true by others. Upon his return to Ithaca, both the land and the man have aged, and Odysseus's suspicion helps to set the tone for subsequent events. The poem allows the correlation between absence of person and dissipation of identity to surface to help us better understand its staggered resolution.

At the beginning of this segment of the tale, part of the audience's interest must be in how Odysseus will react to the challenge of confirming his own identity and that of his country. This scene recalls Odysseus's habitual lamentation at the beginning of Book 5. Odysseus begins responding to the situation as he has before, he laments, he curses the Phaeacians—and invokes the theme of payback by wishing that Zeus "the god of suppliants might punish them" (13.215); but he turns almost immediately to a specific and targeted action: counting his goods. Soon after, "it turned out that he lacks none of his goods, but he was mourning his homeland, / dragging himself along the strand of the much-resounding sea, / weeping much when Athena approaches him" (τῶν μὲν ἄρ' οὔ τι πόθει· ὁ δ' ὀδύρετο πατρίδα γαῖαν / ἑρπύζων παρὰ θῖνα πολυφλοίσβοιο θαλάσσης, / πόλλ' ὀλοφυρόμενος. σχεδόθεν δέ οἱ ἦλθεν Ἀθήνη, 13.219–21). The action described here, as indicated by the participle ἑρπύζων, may have struck ancient audiences as particularly pathetic or desperate. The action is a stooping, defeated, and stumbling gait—often indicating deep sorrow, if not futile activity. For example, Achilles in the *Iliad* is described as "lingering/creeping near [Patroklos's] pyre, crying endlessly" (ἑρπύζων παρὰ πυρκαϊὴν ἀδινὰ στεναχίζων, 23.225). In the *Iliad* as well, Zeus laments that "there is nothing of all the creatures who creep / and breathe upon the earth that is more pitiful than man" (οὐ μὲν γάρ τί πού ἐστιν ὀϊζυρώτερον ἀνδρὸς / πάντων, ὅσσά τε γαῖαν ἔπι πνείει τε καὶ ἕρπει, 17.446–47), as he watches Hektor don Achilles's weapons and seal his own fate. Similarly, Laertes shuffles about the vineyard, according to Telemachus (ἑρπύζοντ' ἀνὰ γουνὸν ἀλῳῆς οἰνοπέδοιο, 1.193). This frames a moment of obsessive repetition, of moving in a senseless state without agency. Later Odysseus will use this

same verb—creeping—when he prophesies to his wife that "Odysseus is already here in his paternal land / sitting or creeping [ἥμενος ἢ ἕρπων], learning of these evil deeds / and he plants evil too for all the suitors" (17.157–59). This transformation from the man who first appeared in the epic crying on the edge of the sea (5.158) to one who speaks of himself righting wrongs from a position of apparent weakness is the story of the epic second's half. Ancient audiences may have been impatient to learn the *how* of Odysseus's vengeance. In this chapter, the *how* is at stake as well: how his homecoming and its methods reflect on the structure of the epic's first half and the depiction of a mind returning from isolation to a community.

In the following discussion, I will explore the creation of narrative agency by examining Odysseus's lies in the second half of the epic from a perspective informed by correspondence and coherence in memory. The lying tales, I suggest, offer a continuing although coded probing of the relationship between the self, internal motivation, external action, and an evaluation of consequences. The series of lies Odysseus tells should be viewed partly as thematic extensions of the tales of Books 9–12. But Odysseus's storytelling changes from reflective of his own experiences to manipulative of his addressees and, finally, in addresses to the suitors in particular, predictive of future actions. In an important way, this pattern continues the process of Narrative Therapy, as Odysseus continues to re-author his past in order to predict and act in the future. But this process also entails a complex negotiation between the correspondence of narrative details, which may be shared by a community, and the agent's need for coherence. My reading of the lies echoes what others have said—that they are instruments by which he achieves his psychological homecoming—but also argues that they have other functions as well in helping to distinguish Odysseus's character further (for himself and his audiences) and in providing insights for the Homeric understanding of the interdependence between storytelling and the working of human minds.

I will start by discussing correspondence and coherence in memory again and, with reference to Hesiod, by suggesting that these forces are present at the core of Greek culture through their storytelling conventions. Then, I will turn to Odysseus's lies to his father to establish some themes for the epic's second half before turning to address the major lies thematically as methods for reconfiguring and establishing the self and also as means of exerting narrative control. Such narrative control both demonstrates Odysseus' cleverness (his *mētis*) and offers an opportunity for audiences to continue to consider the impact stories have on their

audiences.[2] In surveying the forces of correspondence and coherence in his lies in two thematic treatments, I will argue that each new version narrows the gap between the lost Odysseus and the one who can return home.

A. Memory, Coherence, and Truth

In the last chapter, I framed Odysseus's tale to the Phaeacians as a depiction of someone using storytelling to reflect on the experiences and actions that led to suffering and the destruction of the self. In telling his tale, Odysseus re-authors his narrative in such a way that he reestablishes his own agency in a universe that has waylaid his journey and kept him from home. By telling his tale, Odysseus re-envisions himself as an actor in the world, as that "man famous for tricks," (9.19–20) and makes his return possible. But, as I closed by stating, Narrative Therapy also entails re-membering conversations. Because our identities are not autonomous, they are dependent, in part, on other people and places to confirm who we are. So, part of the task of the epic's second half is to show how Odysseus accomplishes the task of reassembling the community that allows him to be a son, a father, a husband, and a king. But within this movement are potentially troubling presuppositions about how story works in the collaboration of storyteller and audience.

The epic's second half is paced around a series of reunions, recognitions, and misdirections that follow a similar pattern, including his testing lies, the offering of a sign to prove his identity, and the formulation of a plan of action to follow the recognition.[3] Where recognitions imply a correlation between facts or events and memory, misdirections suggest the practice of storytelling evokes a sense of self in the world that departs from what we might strictly consider fact and fiction. Insightful treatment of these reunion scenes has emphasized how Odysseus uses narrative to match the experience and interests of his audiences; the extent to which he blends elements of fact in with his fictions; and the fact that he instrumentalizes narrative to achieve his purposes—his narratives are the means by which he facilitates his actions' ends.[4] Odysseus's lies also allow the integration of elements from other Odysseys into this one; exploring themes and expanding the structure of this *Odyssey*; and they provide an opportunity to witness the next stage in Odysseus's reclamation of his self.[5] Just as the eponymous hero is *polutropos*, so too is he *polysemous*—the presentation of his use of

narrative performs all of these tasks simultaneously, leaving it for the audience to feel the emphasis of one or the other. Yet these tales also offer additional opportunities to see the way Odysseus deploys different, somewhat coherent selves to act in the world(s) he encounters.

So, while the various approaches to Odysseus's lies I just mentioned must not be dismissed or minimized, I would like to frame them as extensions of the themes and strategies explored in Odysseus's narratives in Books 9–12 (and, indeed, the narratives of both parts of the epic can be said to read or interpret each other for their audiences). A survey of the fictive stories in the second half can also show (1) how Odysseus continues to use narrative in the creation of self, revisiting and revising themes examined in the previous chapters; and (2) how this self and its attendant narrative forms are situated in a community of people whose lives are mediated by and shaped by the stories Odysseus (and his epic) tell.

In this discussion, it is important to conceive of each story Odysseus tells as a variation of a core narrative with Odysseus's evolving, even if superficially fictionalized, self at its center. This builds in part on the proposal from the last chapter that Odysseus is engaged in "re-authoring" conversations. As Michael White suggests, such "conversations invite people to continue to develop and tell stories about their lives, but they also help people to include some more neglected but potentially significant events and experiences that are "out of phase" with their dominant storylines" (2007:61). Odysseus's continued weighing of agency, then, has a therapeutic dimension. One of my suggestions in the previous chapter is that the retelling of his own narrative allows Odysseus to explore what Jerome Bruner has called the "landscape of action" (1986:11) to unveil the landscape of his consciousness both for himself personally and the external audience. The landscape of action entails the "story"—all of the plot elements, alleged intentions, circumstances etc. that are part of effective storytelling; the landscape of consciousness is the emerging map of the mind(s) that tells the tale and allows for multiple responses to the stories. Odysseus's lies in Ithaca are, in part, about his movement through the *landscape of memory* and they provide multiple audiences to witness his narratives and share in the communalization of his experiences.[6] As specialists in trauma have noted, such a landscape is treacherous and can have a distortive effect on a person's experience of new events.[7] Changing the way we navigate the past alters the way we approach the future. Even when we tell false stories about ourselves we are still engaged in meaningful assertions about how we view our place in the

world, our actions, and our core character.[8]

Throughout the epic's second half, Odysseus can be viewed as using confabulation (essentially, creating falsified narratives) to recreate a sense of self. He relies on *coherence* in narrative—details that make sense together and communicate a self who functions in the world—rather than *correspondence*, which is the equivalence between events in the world and events in the story that we might label as facts.[9] Martin Conway, in writing about these tendencies in human memory, foregrounds the fact that "cognition is driven by goals; memory is motivated" (2005:594). For Conway, the "self" is the interlocking complex of goals and associated self-images (or what others might consider narrative details drawn from memory). Correspondence, from this perspective, relies on a more basic type of episodic (or sequencing) memory, which facilitates day-to-day survival. In emphasizing the difference between coherence and correspondence in memory systems, Conway suggests that the "working self" may in fact at times "operate independently" from what he calls the "autobiographical knowledge base."[10] Of greater importance for this chapter, Conway suggests that minds—animal or human—which over-rely on correspondence, "will not be able to engage in long-term planning" (2005:623).[11] Conversely, "the working self" actively emphasizes and makes "accessible" memories or "autobiographical knowledge in a "more or less coherent story" to support "the continued pursuance of current goals" (607). So, it is not that narrative coherence trumps correspondence to reality, but rather that correspondences are selected and privileged to facilitate coherence.

The interplay between correspondence and coherence may, in fact, be an essential part of Greek poetics and the poetic tradition of Odysseus as a character.[12] At the beginning of Hesiod's *Theogony*, the Muses famously declare "we know how to tell many false things similar to the truth and we know how to speak the truth when we want to" (ἴδμεν ψεύδεα πολλὰ λέγειν ἐτύμοισιν ὁμοῖα, / ἴδμεν δ' εὖτ' ἐθέλωμεν ἀληθέα γηρύσασθαι, 27–28) and Odysseus, after one of his more sterling tales to Penelope, is described as "someone speaking many lies similar to the truth" (ἴσκε ψεύδεα πολλὰ λέγων ἐτύμοισιν ὁμοῖα, *Od*. 19.203).[13] Odysseus is marked out in the epic tradition as having a special capacity for fiction: as Carolyn Higbie notes, he is the only hero who lies about himself (1995:163). Rather than considering these moments as reflections of a tension between "fact and fiction," we might find the tension between correspondence and coherence more illuminating.[14] Such a formulation seems to me true not just to the way cultural narratives function, but also

to the operation of the human mind. And, further, such a framework helps us better understand the relevance of Odysseus's depiction as a storyteller and his development as an agent. Indeed, this dynamic may look towards greater mental sophistication in general: the Muses, before they declare their ability to elide distinctions between falsehood and truth, dismiss the shepherds as "rustic ... wretched reproaches, nothing but bellies" (ποιμένες ἄγραυλοι, κάκ' ἐλέγχεα, γαστέρες οἷον, 26). This perhaps implies that without the ability to do as the Muses do—to manipulate narrative to a coherent end—men are mere "bellies," just animals who live day-to-day. Through the power of the Muses—to select narrative details and deploy a goal-oriented story—the Hesiodic narrator and Odysseus embody the narrative sophistication of human minds.[15]

Just as the Theogonic narrative selects from the range of mythical episodes to create a coherent narrative that is goal-driven, so Odysseus too selects and reintegrates details throughout Books 13–19. In Conway's terms, we get to witness through the selection of details the development of Odysseus's "working self" in the pursuit of his narrative's goals. That this happens on Ithaca is of additional relevance, both metaphorical and literal. First, Odysseus's prior action has been drawn over an expansive narrative and physical landscape; the tighter, less fantastic confines of Ithaca constitute another landscape altogether: through Odysseus's narratives one landscape is superimposed upon another, as the world of his stories is used to make the journey through the immediate physical reality of Ithaca. In this way, a psychological whole is achieved through the blending of the tale of wandering into the tale of return. Put another way: as Odysseus journeys from the shore of Ithaca (where he speaks to Athena) through the margins into the palace and then again deeper to Laertes' retreat, he also retraces elements of his own journey through the stories he tells his new audiences. His revisions of this journey—fictive or not—constitute another map of his developing understanding about his experiences and himself. In a tertiary step, audiences are invited to create through their responses to and evaluations of these metafictions a landscape of consciousness of their own.

Odysseus's self-creation also proves to be a kind of narrative supremacy. During this creation of a complex and rich narrative, we can see Odysseus modifying, emending, and adapting his views of self and the world on Ithaca. As Adele Haft notes, readers have long understood that Odysseus adapts his lies based to his audience (1984:300). She adds that the lies understood in a sequence reveal the growth of Odysseus's confidence.[16] By using even false stories to explore and perform a sense of

self, Odysseus also shows his audiences that storytellers have agency in part because they are capable of reading others. Odysseus's ability to reflect his internal audience's interests and, by extension, the epic's ability to do the same for external audiences, is further evidence of a folk psychology that understands of the importance of "mind-reading" for storytellers who "ascribe states of minds to others and [themselves]."[17] In exploring agency and the motivation for characters' decisions and beliefs about their place in their world, moreover, the epic portrays the cognitive ability of narrative to understand and attribute mental states to other peoples.[18]

B. Odysseus's Lies: A Self Reconfigured

If Odysseus's tales are object or outcome oriented, where they ultimately end up may help us understand the forces that shape them along the way. So, before summarizing the lies as a group, it is useful to consider the tale presented to Laertes in Book 24. When Odysseus first meets his father in a scene that has struck audiences as both typical of the hero and especially cruel, there are echoes of two other moments in the epic structurally and thematically.[19] After a night spent with Penelope and before the news of the suitors' slaughter reaches their families, Odysseus makes one final journey to the remote farm where his father has retired from city life. He puts on another guise for this encounter and tells Laertes that he has traveled from afar. His questions, probing whether or not he is really in Ithaca (εἰ ἐτεόν γ' Ἰθάκην τήνδ' ἱκόμεθ', 24.259), recall his initial return to the island in Book 13 (see Fenik 1974:47–50; cf. Walcot 1977:18), while the postponement of his (false and true) name repeats that essential motif deployed for the external audience in Book 1, among the Phaeacians in Books 6–8, and on Ithaca in Books 13–23.

As with his staggered unveiling in the epic's second half, Odysseus's reclamation of his name in his father's presence is at first postponed and then counterfeited. When he first addresses his father, he neither names himself as a speaker nor, as in earlier scenes, comes straight out and names himself as a subject of a tale.[20] He merely says that he knew a man who "claimed to be of Ithacan stock who was insisting / that his father was Laertes the son of Arkesios" (εὔχετο δ' ἐξ Ἰθάκης γένος ἔμμεναι, αὐτὰρ ἔφασκε / Λαέρτην Ἀρκεισιάδην πατέρ' ἔμμεναι αὐτῷ 24.269–70). The invocation of the place and his father recalls Odysseus's self-naming from Book 9 (19–24), but it is the first time in the epic when Odysseus

utters his grandfather's name.[21]

So far, what this scene promises to share with the other lies Odysseus tells are recapitulations of Odyssean themes and structures (e.g., naming and its delay) and an incremental acquisition of Odysseus's Ithacan identity. Other parts of his speech raise new questions. For example, what is the meaning of invoking the name Arkesios at this point in the narrative? One could suggest that since Odysseus has been reminded of his family prior to this book and now that he is ready to reclaim his place as son—something he will confirm by describing his family's trees—he re-inscribes himself into the proper place in his genealogy.[22] In part, this signals a clearer retracing of identity through genealogy. Just as Telemachus names himself as the single son of a single son, so too Odysseus traces his lineage one step back.[23] That Odysseus is thinking about a three-generation sequence and himself as a son may be clearer from what happens in the following lines. First, as I mentioned earlier, Odysseus-the-performer delays naming the Ithacan guest who graced his home. He describes him first as a son of Laertes, son of Arkesios, from Ithaca, and then reports that he was at his home and received splendid gifts from him and then left, five years ago (24.258–79). At this point, Odysseus has adopted the persona of someone like Alkinoos—a distant king who entertained Odysseus and rewarded him with a nearly excessive range of guest-gifts. Even after Laertes confirms that the stranger is in Ithaca and that he is the father of the guest whose home he is seeking, Odysseus continues to spin lies with a hint of truth. He claims he is "from Alybas, where I live in glorious homes / the son of Apheidas, the son of lord Polupēmōn / and my name is Epēritos" (εἰμὶ μὲν ἐξ Ἀλύβαντος, ὅθι κλυτὰ δώματα ναίω, / υἱὸς Ἀφείδαντος Πολυπημονίδαο ἄνακτος· / αὐτὰρ ἐμοί γ' ὄνομ' ἐστὶν Ἐπήριτος, 24.304–6). The names he adopts here are ambiguous, communicating different potential messages.

The content and shape of this tale are related both to the epic's interests and to Odysseus's view of himself. In this telling, Odysseus retains traits from his real experience, "he was sent against his will at sea by some god." In addition, Odysseus seems to allow glimpses into his 'landscape of consciousness' through some of the details he introduces. He tells his father that Odysseus left his home five years before under good omen (302–14). The false names that Odysseus chooses here from his false family tree may also reflect his persona and his experience. As Nikoletta Kanavou suggests, these names are deliberate opportunities for play "with disguised references to aspects of the hero's self" (2015:104). The most obvious clue, on the surface, is Apheidas, which means

"unsparing," while the grandfather's name, Polu-pēmōn, means "of many pains."[24] The final element, his personal name Epēritos, is the least transparent: Eustathius argues that it derives from the verb *erizein*, "to engage in strife."[25] Eustathius also interprets the paternal name, Apheidas, positively, suggesting that it anticipates the projected liberality of the speaker in terms of gift giving. The name could also indicate however, a person taken to risk or unsparing of others: to wit, Odysseus is in this scene "unsparing" of his father who suffers "much grief" because of him.

This sequence presents a rather obvious rearranging of available structures and motifs in the creation of an instrumental tale. The coincidence of details with meaning relevant to stories already deployed may be merely convenient, but they conveniently create a coherence that echoes both Odysseus's experiences and aspects of his identity. But in this final tale, the coherence is strained by the audience response. Laertes is driven to tears by this speech and Odysseus breaks in and says "I myself, I am the one about whom who you ask / I have come home in this twentieth year to my paternal land" (κεῖνος μὲν δὴ ὅδ' αὐτὸς ἐγώ, πάτερ, ὃν σὺ μεταλλᾷς, / ἦλυθον εἰκοστῷ ἔτεϊ ἐς πατρίδα γαῖαν, 24.321–22). But this is not enough to prove his identity. His father asks for a clear sign (σῆμά τί μοι νῦν εἰπὲ ἀριφραδές, 329) and Odysseus shows him the scar (331) after which he names his maternal grandfather Autolykos, followed by his recitation of the trees his father described to him when he was a child (333–45). "As he recognizes the signs" (σήματ' ἀναγνόντος ...), Laertes's limbs give way and he faints into his son's arms: their reunion is complete.

Many have traced out the interlocking structural and thematic components of the repetitions to be found in Odysseus' lying tales (both among one another and from the epic's first half); what I am interested in emphasizing is the way that an audience might understand a narrative mind combining experience and knowledge in the creation of a tale both to advance and prepare for future action and in a recuperation and rehabilitation of a sense of self. But the creation of story also depends on a multi-minded context. Part of the point of the sequence of homecoming reunions is to emphasize that individual identity is in large measure created and confirmed by others. For stories to be told they need audiences; for lies to operate as fact they need someone to believe them. Odysseus's narrative here draws on his own experience in an attempt to use a story to test his father, but the narrative crumbles when the tale's target responds strongly.

When Odysseus puts on the mask of Epēritos—the son of Apheidas,

the son of Polupēmōn—he makes himself a wealthy noble to face another wealthy noble, both to echo the values of his addressee and to assert his identity as a nobleman in a position to give gifts. The names also speak to an expression of his identity for those who are willing to hear it: in sequence, one who is unsparing may take all risks and, as a result, create pain for himself and those around them. And the name this man claims for himself is a rather opaque one, related to strife and conflict (perhaps appropriate for what is going to happen in this book). In naming the three generations of his actual family, Odysseus also selects, integrates, and presents traits to project a coherent self who functions in this world.

For now, I would like to observe that Odysseus (1) echoes and reuses structural and thematic strategies shared with the poem's narrator in delaying his name and in blending layers of narrative (the true tales and the false). This blend (2) projects elements from Odysseus's experience into a confabulation that has instrumental aims on the world outside the mind of the speaker.[26] As such, it proves to (3) reveal a deep understanding of the interests and traits of its audience (and, as in other cases, may also reflect a Homeric understanding of the different traits and needs of its audiences). Finally, the correspondences between the narrative details of the fiction and the truth (4) attest to developments in Odysseus's character within this epic, which over Books 13–24 emerge in an incremental acceptance of his Ithacan self, and through a re-writing or re-creation of a coherent, full "working self."[27] In moderating among these different voices and audiences, Odysseus continues (5) to advance the epic's interest in causality and notions of self, a project he pursues at times by playing with names and their meanings.

Odysseus's lies are also one of the main structural motifs knitting together Books 13–19 together: He first responds to meeting Athena in disguise with a long false autobiography, after his confusing waking on an Ithaca he does not recognize (13.256–86); then he tells his longest fictive narrative to Eumaios, while he enjoys his hospitality (14.199–359); followed by a brief story to Antinoos (17.415–44) and a more prolonged story and dialogue with Penelope (19.165–202, 221–48 and 262–307; see Reece 1994:159). These tales contain common plot elements, which I have numbered, and also thematic and ethical considerations, which I have added to Reece's list (1994:160; inspired in part by King 1999 and Newton 2015, both of whom focus on Odysseus's story to Eumaios).[28]

1. Return of a hero from the siege of Troy (13.262–64; 14.229–42, 19.182–87)

2. A storm or shipwreck (13.276–77, 14.299–319; 19.186–89; 200–203; 277–78)
3. Phoenician sailors who transport Odysseus (13.272–86, 14.288–98)
4. Importance of Crete (13.256–58; 14.199–209; 19.172–79)[29]
5. Importance of Idomeneus (13.259–70; 14.235–42; 19.180–81, 190–91)
6. Clear, revisionist echoes of the *Apologoi* (13.258–270, Murder of Orsilokhos; 14.261–265 = Kikonian raid/Kyklopean scene); Dodona oracle narrative is like Tiresias's prophecy; Structural similarities seven years in Egypt (14.285 = seven years on Ogygia) plus one year in Phoenicia (= Aiaia, but in reverse); repeated revision of raiding sequences at Kikonians and the island of the Kyklops
7. Revisionist presentations of the broader past: 14.216–28; 14.235–39: the Cretan went to war because of a fear of ill-fame; the Cretan was a bastard
8. Repentance of an "Iliadic" (or simply "non-Odyssean") self
9. 9Expressions of divine control or "theodicy" (14.268–70)

As a group of qualities thus collated, the lies tell some essential truths, but there is more to be gained from understanding them in a sequence, as a series of sessions where Odysseus experiments with elements from his past to ensure a different future. My particular interest is in elements 6–9, how Odysseus uses lies to revise and reflect upon his own past choices and to reexamine notions of agency (and bring them more in line with the epic's overall viewpoint on human action). Odysseus's re-exploration of his earlier identities and experiences, further, centers on his weakness and lack of agency in contrast to the control he exhibits once he returns to Ithaca. The tales allow Odysseus to "write" a self who is more unlike the suitors (and his lost companions) than like them: he is no longer someone who permitted the crew's raid of the Kikonians or himself entered the Kyklops' cave. So rather than examine each tale in its fullness, I will trace Odysseus's incremental change by addressing the themes isolated in items 6–9 above in two broad discussions: Odysseus's continued exploration of personal and narrative agency ("Controlling the story; Controlling the self") and his developmental editing of his fictional and actual selves ("Story-blending"). In both cases—and really, in concert—these narratives prepare Odysseus and his conspirators for the action of the final books, even as they also return Odysseus to his life in Ithaca.[30]

C. Controlling the Story, Controlling the Self

Selected aspects of the lies help to emphasize the way Odysseus moves between frameworks of correspondence and coherence to create narrative "selves" with specific goals. These goals have external functions—for example, looking tough to a stranger on an unknown shore who happens to be Athena, angling for information and help from the servant Eumaios, testing and entrapping the suitors, and testing and perhaps even subtly cuing Penelope. But they also allow Odysseus to reconsider who he has been with a view towards accomplishing the goals of who he is now. These stories present certain incremental steps forward as Odysseus admits greater correspondence to who he was at some times and at others, as when he reflects upon his fictive self's indifference to matters of the home. Both sequences allow him to evaluate the characteristics that eventuated in suffering.

That agency and causality are important to Odysseus's lying tales is clear from his first such story in Ithaca. Odysseus's lies to Athena in Book 13 reflect some important differences from the narratives that precede and follow: first, it is the only moment in the epic's second half where Odysseus is not certain of his audience's identity. In addition, Odysseus is in an exposed position on the edge of the sea with an impressive array of goods at risk. The story he tells is one that emphasizes his own agency and ability.[31] He starts out by asserting "I *myself* came here with these possessions" (εἰλήλουθα καὶ αὐτὸς / χρήμασι σὺν τοίσδεσσι, 13.257–58) and "I killed the dear son of Idomeneus / swift-footed Orsilokhos" (ἐπεὶ φίλον υἷα κατέκτανον Ἰδομενῆος, Ὀρσίλοχον πόδας ὠκύν, 13.259–60).[32] His entire speech to Athena exhibits a curious and conspicuous absence of any attempt to credit or blame the gods for his fortunes. When it is time to kill Orsilokhos, for example, he has a companion help set an ambush (13.267–68, the companion mysteriously disappears from the narrative), then he secretly kills Orsilokhos (λάθον δέ ἑ θυμὸν ἀπούρας, 13.270) and pays Phoenician sailors to give him passage from Crete (13.272–75). A wind forces these sailors off course to Ithaca, but no deity is said to be behind it (13.276–77).

Such statements prompt from *Athena* an insistence that she has taken care of him. She strongly declares her name: "But you did not recognize / Pallas Athena, Zeus's daughter / the one who always stands over you and guards you in all your toils / I even made you dear to all the Phaeacians" (οὐδὲ σύ γ' ἔγνως / Παλλάδ' Ἀθηναίην, κούρην Διός, ἥ τέ τοι αἰεὶ / ἐν πάντεσσι πόνοισι παρίσταμαι ἠδὲ φυλάσσω, καὶ δέ σε Φαιήκεσσι φίλον

πάντεσσιν ἔθηκα, 13.299–302). Athena also lays out the basic framework for the rest of the epic: Odysseus will endure grief in his home and refrain from revealing his identity (13.306–10).

This scene seems to re-balance the relationship between human and divine wills toward a deterministic worldview. But if we consider this from the perspective of the development of a "working self," one that tells stories marked by coherence in order to circumnavigate a sense of helplessness, the reconfiguration makes more sense. Odysseus starts out his journey on Ithaca by doubting Athena and impugning her motives. He questions the god for not helping him once they boarded their ships (13.318–22). As a reflection of religious belief this seems problematic, but as a rhetorical strategy it effectivly compels Athena to clarify her support.[33] Athena takes the implicit criticism; she says it was always her plan and it was Poseidon who was angry at him and whom she did not want to fight (13.341–43). In this, the epic revisits and revises its emphasis on human agency and divine control: the relationship is far more fraught, as the audience has learned since Book 1, because the gods are not always of one mind in their plans. At the same time, the audience observes Odysseus deploying different versions of himself in order to face the obstacles in his journey. Odysseus becomes an active partner with Athena at the end of their discussion in Book 13. In a scene that echoes Telemachus's partnership with Athena during Books 1–2, the pair plot together, culminating in Odysseus asking Athena to "weave *mētis* so that I may pay them back / put an ever-bold power in my chest yourself" (ἀλλ' ἄγε μῆτιν ὕφηνον, ὅπως ἀποτείσομαι αὐτούς· / πὰρ δέ μοι αὐτὴ στῆθι μένος πολυθαρσὲς ἐνεῖσα, 13.386–87).

When Odysseus first arrives in Ithaca, then, he projects a view of himself as an agent—the imagined Cretan Odysseus has made the decisions that led to his (fictive) exile from his (fictive) home and he has arrived in Ithaca with a purpose. As a generalization, these fictive elements apply truthfully to his return to Ithaca as Odysseus. From the broader cosmological perspective of the epic, however, no mortal acts so brazenly and succeeds without divine partnership; as a corollary, no human suffers without divine interest and some personal responsibility. In each of his successive tales, Odysseus continues to deploy different mixtures of human and divine agency. The story he tells Eumaios blends concepts of agency and ability. He frames the story by lamenting how many griefs he has suffered thanks to the gods (14.198) but emphasizes at the outset that, although he was not a true-born son of a Cretan king, he still acquired wealth, a wife, and goods because of his excellence (*aretē*) as

one who was neither braggart nor a coward (14.212– 13). But he does credit the gods for "putting boldness in my heart" (ἦ μὲν δὴ θάρσος μοι ..., 216).

To clarify, I am not proposing that such different articulations of the relationship between human action and divine sponsorship reflect actual beliefs—although it may be fair to suggest that they represent a range of audience beliefs—but rather that the voicing of such beliefs are depicted by the epic as shaping the speaker's view of himself and his ability to act in the world—his sense of agency, as it were. Where Odysseus credits his own virtue and divine inspiration for his successes, he does not quail at centering a similar mixture for his suffering. There is, however, a subtle shift as the narrative cleaves closer to Odysseus's own life.[34] Again, in his story to Eumaios, this "Cretan" credits the Trojan War to Zeus (14.235), when prior to the expedition he was his own man.[35] Subsequent to the city's fall, too, it is a god who scatters the Achaeans (... θεὸς δ' ἐκέδασσεν Ἀχαιούς, 14.242) and Zeus who devises a terrible end for him (14.243). Out of this, however, personal agency arises again: the Cretan's heart urges him to sail to Egypt ("my *thumos* compelled me to take a fleet to Egypt" Αἴγυπτόνδε με θυμὸς ἀνώγει ναυτίλλεσθαι, 14.246), echoing expressions of agency from the *Apologoi*. This urge leads to the destructive series of events that result with the speaker arriving destitute on Ithaca's shore. It is this speaker who called together companions to go raiding again in ships (14.259–60).

In this false autobiography, Odysseus selects aspects of his own experience again and reflects on his own responsibility, as he does during the *Apologoi*. While one narrative goal is to craft a coherent story for Eumaios, it is useful to imagine that he is also searching for coherency in his own decisions. (Or, we could imagine the poem providing an example of him combining real and fictive elements for audiences to contemplate.) As such, logically, if he—both fictive and not—was responsible thanks to his virtue for his successes at raiding, he had some agency as well in the consequences of his unsuccessful raiding, only to be stymied by his crew's lack of restraint. To Eumaios, Odysseus explains that he urged his men to go abroad (ὤτρυνα νέεσθαι, 14.261), but when things go badly Zeus is blamed again (14.268). And Zeus is credited even when good things happen, too. It is *Zeus* who "put the thought in my chest" (αὐτὰρ ἐμοὶ Ζεὺς αὐτὸς ἐνὶ φρεσὶν ὧδε νόημα, 14.273) to throw down arms and beg the king to save him among the Egyptians; but this form of Zeus may be ritualized and metaphorical: for in the same passage, Odysseus explains that the Egyptian king "was avoiding the rage of Zeus Xeinios / who feels

righteous anger at evil deeds" (Διὸς δ' ὠπίζετο μῆνιν / ξεινίου, ὅς τε μάλιστα νεμεσσᾶται κακὰ ἔργα, 14.283–84). It is obvious that such a recitation of the ritual underpinning of hospitality is aimed in part at Odysseus's host during the tale (here, Eumaios); but the articulation offers a more complex view of agency still. Zeus here has not literally formed a thought in Odysseus's brain; instead, his function as guarantor of the customs of hospitality allows Odysseus to manipulate the situation. In a way, this again evokes that balance between god and man modelled in Books 2 and 5 and the "double motivation" described in the Introduction.[36]

Odysseus is also capable, in his contemplation of human actions, of attributing to others the guile and manipulation he applies to himself. In his tale to Eumaios, the Phoenician who plans to sell him into slavery "knows deceptive tricks" (ἀπατήλια εἰδώς, 14.288), "had done many evils to other men" (ὃς δὴ πολλὰ κάκ' ἀνθρώπους ἐεόργει, 289), "persuaded Odysseus with his plans" (ὅς μ' ἄγε παρπεπιθὼν ᾗσι φρεσίν, 290), and "counseled lies" (ψεύδεα βουλεύσας, 296). Again, the plot choices reflect the experiences of his immediate audience; as a scholion notes, the story of a cheating Phoenician reflects Eumaios' own backstory.[37] And although it may go too far to claim that Odysseus, by understanding the trouble the Phoenician had brought to others, is conceding that he has caused similar pains himself, the comparison still leaves such a conclusion available to the poem's audiences.

One could draw a simpler conclusion, too: here, the Phoenician, who is a foreign stand-in for Odysseus, tempts him to go abroad, thus endangering himself, with the promise of possessions from his home (14.291). Where earlier in the same episode Odysseus attributes his raiding to restlessness and a disinterest in home-life, here he concedes that his own acquisitiveness was influential as well. Even though the mysterious (and fictive) Phoenician is blamed and Zeus whips up another challenge (14.300–5), Odysseus ultimately blames his own impulses for his suffering. So, when Odysseus explains that he boarded the fateful ship from Phoenicia to Libya "by necessity" (14.298), he *understood* the situation and his own complicity in it ("even though I was expecting" ὀϊόμενός περ).[38] As a confessional narrative, this might not satisfy many; but as a story that endeavors to present a self who can function in the world and explain the consequences of decisions, this represents great progress from the man who sat crying on the shore every day in Book 5.

In closing his tale to Eumaios, Odysseus returns to emphasizing human betrayal. The Thesprotian sailors who were to take him home

devised an "evil plan on their own" to sell him into slavery (τοῖσιν δὲ κακὴ φρεσὶν ἤνδανε βουλὴ, 14.337; echoing Odysseus's companions at 10.46). And, although he credits the gods with loosening his bonds on the ship, in the tale he slides down an oar and remains in Ithaca (νηχόμενος, μάλα δ' ὦκα θύρηθ' ἔα ἀμφὶς ἐκείνων, 14.352). He ends by insisting that the gods hid him easily and that it was still his fate to live (ἔτι γάρ νύ μοι αἶσα βιῶναι, 14.359).

Odysseus's development at this point of the epic is nearly complete; in his subsequent tales he makes only minor adjustments to his expressions of agency in his exchanges with the suitors and Penelope. In Book 17, he fashions his former self as a wealthy man who gave much to a wanderer (as Alkinoos did for him on Skheria), only to suffer capture and slavery when *Zeus* sends him on a raiding party (ἀλλὰ Ζεὺς ἀλάπαξε Κρονίων· — ἤθελε γάρ που·, 17.424) and when his men, again, yield to hubris.[39] The story is almost verbatim that which was told in Book 14, although Odysseus does concede, "I myself was summoning trusty companions" (ἔνθ' ἦ τοι μὲν ἐγὼ κελόμην ἐρίηρας ἑταίρους, 17.428). While Zeus is instrumental in their failure, this version of the tale does not end up with Odysseus earning wealth and fame among the Egyptian king; instead, he is given to a guest, Dmētōr, son of Iasos, King of Cyprus. Although this king seems entirely made up for the occasion by Odysseus, his name—the "conquerer"—is ominous, descriptive for Odysseus's imagined experience and predictive for his actions to come as the returning king of Ithaca. Where earlier versions of the story develop coherence by selecting fictional and real elements to blend, here, Odysseus refines his tale and projects a worldview in which he is the survivor, while others perish because of their excess. This is not merely a repetition of the epic's refrain that men suffer beyond their fate because of recklessness; instead, it also implies that the motif is motivated by a need to make sense of the world. For Odysseus it provides an explanatory frame that exculpates him both of the death of his companions and of the coming demise of the suitors. This frame precisely mirrors the fate of his companions as affirmed by the poem as well, allowing for the audience to make connections between the narrative strategies of the poem's different plots.

The story Odysseus tells Penelope of "Odysseus" to comfort her is one that also hearkens closer to the worldview expressed by the epic at large: he echoes plot elements from his tale to the Phaeacians and the proem, admitting to Penelope—even if through a distanced guise—that he lost all his men, was hated by the gods, and was rescued by the Phaeacians (19.260–75). This version of Odysseus, however, is not merely someone

who suffers, he is also an agent. According to Odysseus's version of events here, he is not yet home because he "thought it better in his heart to gather goods over much land" (ἀλλ' ἄρα οἱ τό γε κέρδιον εἴσατο θυμῷ, / χρήματ' ἀγυρτάζειν πολλὴν ἐπὶ γαῖαν ἰόντι, 19.283–84). He is not just an agent who makes decisions, but he is also one who "knows more advantageous things than any other of mortal men (ὣς περὶ κέρδεα πολλὰ καταθνητῶν ἀνθρώπων / οἶδ' Ὀδυσεύς, οὐδ' ἄν τις ἐρίσσειε βροτὸς ἄλλος, 19.285-86). Here, Odysseus signals that he has control over the narrative as he has control over himself. He explains his delay again by claiming that "Odysseus" has gone to seek Zeus's will about "how he should come home to his dear homeland when he has been gone so long, whether openly or in secret" (19.296–97) and then he declares that he *is* safe and *will* come home, and that he will *not be gone long*, swearing upon Zeus and the hearth of Odysseus (19.303–4).

D. Story-Blending: Correspondences

So far, I have argued that Odysseus's lying tales present opportunities for him—and the epic overall—to continue explorations of human agency. Over the course of the *Odyssey*, it becomes increasingly clear that control over the world is related to control over stories. The lies are instruments to achieve Odysseus's aims on Ithaca (some of the tricks for which he is so famous), but they also contain many of the same therapeutic aspects as the tales told to the Phaeacians. Indeed, throughout his tales on Ithaca, Odysseus revises accounts of his past, reconsidering not just the version of his self that went to Troy, but also the narratives he presented in the *Apologoi*.[40] The identities Odysseus tries on for himself and the antagonists in his tales attest to a reevaluation of epic characteristics on the part of the narrative, and, I suggest, a reconsideration of his own past for Odysseus (or at least the depiction of such for his audiences by the epic). The lying tales offer the *Odyssey*'s audiences many opportunities to think about correspondence and coherence in Odysseus's tales. In this, they also demonstrate how an effective liar blends elements of fact and fiction in their narratives. Such story-blends, however, are not just efficacious lies: they are also evidence for the interdependence of our experiences and the stories we tell about our lives.

From the perspective of expressions of agency just discussed, it may also be important that Odysseus tells this tale from the perspective of a beggar, although he projects the helplessness and dependence of this

figure on the past as well. As one critic has described it, Odysseus depicts other selves who possess a "vulnerability and dependence on others" (King 1999:74), even as he uses his particular power over narrative and intelligence to control several levels of story. This figure may be especially appropriate from both poetic and psychological perspectives. For the first, the persona of the beggar aptly facilitates Odysseus's heroic identity as a trickster who brings suffering to others.[41] For the second, he cloaks his growing agency within a figure who is assumed to be passive, dependent, and vulnerable.

Odysseus's stories explore the tension in this inversion of outward persona and inward qualities. For example, in his tale to Athena in Book 13, he claims that he fled Crete because he killed Idomeneus' son "swift-footed Orsilokhos" (Ορσίλοχον πόδας ὠκύν, 13.260).[42] The epithet itself here implies that Odysseus is puffing up this fictive version of himself as a mean hero-slayer. When the thematic elements of the tale are added, the narrative seems even more intentional: Odysseus the Cretan killed this swift-footed man "because he wanted to deprive [him] of all that / Trojan booty for which [he suffered] pains in his heart" (οὕνεκά με στερέσαι τῆς ληΐδος ἤθελε πάσης / Τρωϊάδος, τῆς εἵνεκ' ἐγὼ πάθον ἄλγεα θυμῷ, 13.262–63). The thematic markers of the "swift-footed" (πόδας ὠκύν, 13.260) Orsilokhos and the suffering Odysseus may also be meta-heroic: Orsilokhos is an Achilles-like hero marked for his physical prowess.[43]

At a basic level, this type of boasting aims to warn Odysseus's interlocutor off from trying to take his stuff.[44] But there are deeper resonances that attest both to engagements among traditions and an internal exploration of character and experience. From the perspective of narrative traditions, the combination of thematic language associated with the *Odyssey* ("suffering pains in heart") and the motif of spoil division, which motivates the conflict at the beginning of the *Iliad* (where a swift-footed man is involved), invites comparisons between that Trojan War survivor in the traditional myth (Odysseus) and other types of heroes, including the ones who did not survive. But we can move within the metapoetic reflections to issues of identity formation across traditional discourses. Odysseus's fictive self from Crete is more like Odysseus than it seems at first blush: he ambushed Idomeneus' son in a postwar world and then made his departure. *This* version of his self committed an act of violence, fled, and then suffered. Such a concatenation of *a* Trojan story with disruptive homecoming speaks not just to Odysseus's discomfiture with a prior version of himself but also to the *Odyssey*'s difficult attempt to adapt this hero to his old place and time, to seek out correspondences that

create a coherent self across time. Odysseus's combination of the world of Troy with his fictive home on Crete—for he suffered in wars of men and on the painful waves (264)—and the continued conflict over possessions both shows that he is thinking about the possible combinations of these identities and invites his audiences to do the same.

A thematic tension builds in Odysseus's stories between the skills that make someone successful in war and those that may bring him home (to stay). In his story to Eumaios, Odysseus depicts himself as a warrior who chased down many men in war—he was swifter with his feet (14.221). And he concedes that he was not concerned otherwise with work or nurturing his household ("Work was not dear to me / nor was taking care of a house which raises up pretty children." ἔργον δέ μοι οὐ φίλον ἔσκεν / οὐδ' οἰκωφελίη, ἥ τε τρέφει ἀγλαὰ τέκνα, 14.222–23). Instead, ships, wars, and raiding were dear, so much so that even before the Trojan War he was an accomplished raider (14.229–34). This detail is also true for the real Odysseus who talks about sacking cities on the way home from Troy both in the *Apologoi* and in summarizing his journey to Penelope (cf. 23.357). In his Cretan tale that foregrounds this pirating persona, when it was time to go to war, the people clamored for him and Idomeneus to lead the ships and "there was no room to deny it at all / for the voice of the people was harsh" (νήεσσ' ἡγήσασθαι ἐς Ἴλιον· οὐδέ τι μῆχος / ἦεν ἀνήνασθαι, χαλεπὴ δ' ἔχε δήμου φῆμις, 14.238-39). Here, it is easy to imagine an Odysseus who is both trying to arouse pity in his audience and attempting to reflect on his motivations and mistakes in going to war. This tale of the Cretan raider presents an exemplar of heroes, but Odysseus moves in the direction of a moral tale: the warrior hero is not one who returns home.[45] Odysseus imagines himself as someone who neglected the affairs of the home and loved raiding, but was reluctant to go to Troy, compelled instead primarily by obligations to his community.

This first story told to Eumaios lends itself well to a reflection on a purposeful and recuperative selection of memory. Here, Odysseus moves from correspondence to create a coherent tale to influence Eumaios—but, as I have suggested, he also relies on the force of coherence to reconfigure his place in the world: his lies allow him to think of who he was—a raider and a warrior—and then to reconsider what the motivations and consequences of this identity turned out to be.

This formulation should in turn help us to see his narratives together as part of a longer process—the retelling and revisiting of the past Michael White emphasizes as therapeutic. In both Books 14 and 17, he tells of raiding parties that go badly, a pattern that recalls the ill-fated raid on the

Kikonians he narrates in Book 9. Yet his language in these later books betrays a harsher judgement on these acts. When he tells a similar tale to Eumaios, his men "yield to hubris and pursue their *desire*" (οἱ δ' ὕβρει εἴξαντες, ἐπισπόμενοι μένεϊ σφῷ, 14.262).[46] In this case, however, the excess comes from the prosecution of the raid itself rather than from staying too long after it, as with the Kikonians. Eventually, the Egyptians capture his men alive.[47] Odysseus separates himself from his men in his telling to Eumaios; he begs for his own survival and is granted it (14.273–80). In a way, this story represents a "truth" from his own experience: his Cretan men yield to hubris and die too. In both the story of the *Odyssey* and this inset narrative, Odysseus is a sole survivor of human folly. In each case as well, this survival is, in part, reliant on the intervention of a higher power: the Egyptian king who recognizes Odysseus's goodness and treats him as a suppliant is an analog for Zeus's activity in the epic. This particular Cretan tale highlights his dependence on the mercy of others.

Odysseus's first Ithacan retelling is remix of his tale to the Phaeacians, but with a slightly different protagonist and with some integration of his experiences on Skheria.[48] Odysseus characterizes himself as a suppliant warrior. There are other indications of Odysseus's recombination of his earlier stories and more recent events. When, during his tale to Eumaios, he describes the troubles that beset the fateful expedition from Phoenicia to Libya, he re-uses the episode of becalming from the *Apologoi*, adapting the departure from Thrinakia (cf. 12.403–7).[49] Odysseus conflates his own seafaring experiences with Zeus' destroying both ships, leaving him as the sole survivor on Kalypso's island (in the previous tale) and on Thesprotia (in the story to Eumaios). Among the Thesprotians, stand-ins for the Phaeacians, he is rescued by a *son* of the king (φίλος υἱὸς, 14.317), perhaps erasing in this new tale the temptation of a marriageable princess.[50] Odysseus, then, describes how he learned about "Odysseus" who had been entertained among the Thesprotians; he insists he saw the many gifts he had been given but left behind (which is more than a little strange, 14.320–25). *This* Odysseus had gone to consult the oracle at Dodona about how he might get home (332–34) and was given passage by the Thesprotian king, Pheidōn.

The development of his own understanding of his stories—or perhaps a reflection of the anticipated corresponding development of the audience's understanding of his tale—emerges as well in his shorter tale to the suitors: Odysseus reflects "I once lived in a house among men, a blessed man in a wealthy house, and I used to give much to a wanderer" (καὶ γὰρ ἐγώ ποτε οἶκον ἐν ἀνθρώποισιν ἔναιον ὄλβιος ἀφνειὸν καὶ πολλάκι δόσκον ἀλήτῃ

17.419–20). He promises that upon receiving similar care, he will make Antinoos famous (415). This promise contains layered ironies—at a foundational level, Odysseus asserts that fame can come from hospitality; but the pledge of good fame for good behavior leaves unspoken but clear the threat of ill-fame for bad behavior *of guest and host alike*. Eustathius rightly emphasizes that the tale told contrasts with Antinoos' behavior—that his failure to be kind to Odysseus provides the pretext for his later punishment (*Comm. ad Od*. 2.155.39).[51] Yet, the situation is complex here as well, since Odysseus, the actual master of the house, is acting the part of a guest to a host who is actually a transgressive guest.[52] In a circuitous manner, the disguised guest angling for a gift before a lawless host replays the themes from the encounter with Polyphemos in Book 9.

When he lies to Antinoos and the suitors in his own home, Odysseus offers a story that bridges different versions of himself: this fictive self was rich, but also went along with raiders to Egypt (17.425). He repeats the tale he told to Eumaios, foregrounding the fact that his men yielded to *hubris* in their raid and were killed or taken as slaves. By this point, Odysseus has settled upon a view of corrupt and corrupting subordinates, perhaps as a function of his observations of the suitors, but perhaps also as self-justification in his continued musings over his failure to bring his men home and in anticipation of the hubris he must go on to punish. Both examples furnish human hubris as cause of human suffering; in the second, however, audiences may view Odysseus now as an agent of divine justice, rather than a helpless voyeur who watches his men die.

So far, I have been emphasizing the parts of Odysseus's stories which offer glimpses into a mind reassembling experience and visions of his actions in the world in a simultaneous attempt to evaluate prior actions and to act in the present. Odysseus's acts of narration have used facts (correspondences) rather loosely to create narratives that are persuasive to his audiences and that, I suggest, reveal a developing coherence of self with particular ideas about his agency and his continuing mission as an instrument of vengeance. In the last chapter, I noted that Odysseus depicts himself as Zeus's instrument in the blinding of Polyphemos: in telling this story, Odysseus publicly claims that identity for himself in the past and considers how it might suit him in the future. When he gets to Ithaca, he recovers this identity steadily, as he moves towards the actual moment of meting out justice. Odysseus's conversation with Penelope redoubles steps towards coherence and the development of a working self. When questioned, Odysseus responds to Penelope at first with rhetorical flourish, postponing the expression of a personal name in much the way

the opening of the epic and his tales among the Phaeacians do. Indeed, he evokes a narrative harmony with the epic's proem when he explains that he has "suffered grief, wandering over many cities of mortals" (19.170).[53] And then he provides a demographic overview of Crete and a genealogy that goes five generations back to Zeus, invoking his grandfather Minos, his father Deukaliōn, and his older brother Idomeneus. His famous name is Aithōn (183). This name too might have special meaning: it "gleams" and often describes objects for violence or violent creatures.[54]

The pattern of suffering is broken up this time as Odysseus-in-disguise describes "Odysseus's" visit to Crete. It is this first conversation with Penelope that prompts from the narrator the assertion that "[Odysseus] knew how to speak many falsehoods similar to the truth" (ἴσκε ψεύδεα πολλὰ λέγων ἐτύμοισιν ὁμοῖα, 19.203). This fictional self within the fictional tale recalls an Odysseus before the Trojan War who, even then, got driven off course on his way to Troy (19.186–87) and received hospitality among the Cretans. *The* Odysseus *this* Odysseus reminds Penelope of is the one who left with all his ships and men and who was still wearing the clothing his wife made for him (as confirmed later by Odysseus). In all the lies he tells, this is the most specific correspondence to the past—one that is confirmed by Penelope's reaction. The closer Odysseus gets to achieving his goals, the more complex the relationship between his narrative and correspondence to the past becomes. This basic plot function—the need for recognition—is also a reflection of psychological and communal reality: one cannot simply create an identity others will accept without reference to common experiences. As the recognitions accrue, there should be less room for confabulation because of the greater number of witnesses to the signs and the stories that confirm—and constrain—his identity.

There is, perhaps, another level of significance and signification to the recitation of the story about Odysseus's wool cloak. Unraveling this will require another reconsideration of his name and its etymology. The signs that are offered in Book 19 to confirm or further limit Odysseus's identity are physical *sēmata*—e.g., the story of the cloak or scar—which carry additional verbal signification and engage with themes of naming and identification spread throughout he epic. As discussed in the Introduction, Odysseus's name is etymologized in the *Odyssey* itself as having to do with the verb *odussomai* "to hate, be hateful." Many authors have surveyed the possible reflexes of this meaning, reducing them at best to "a man who *showed* an unusual degree of irascibility or hatred in himself, or a man who *caused* an unusual degree of hatred or anger in

others, or man who *suffered* from an unusual degree of hatred or anger in others" (Stanford 1952:211).[55] The multiple interpretations likely found resonance simultaneously in diverse audiences. The epic itself tries to direct the interpretation of this name, emphasizing in particular the possibility that Odysseus is hated by the gods: Zeus at 1.62 (τί νύ οἱ τόσον ὠδύσαο [*ōdusao*], Ζεῦ;) and again in reference to Poseidon at 5.340 (ὠδύσατ' [*ōdusat*] ἐκπάγλως). Later in the epic, when Odysseus's naming is recalled, the focus is on Autolykos' sense that he is hateful to others (πολλοῖσιν γὰρ ἐγώ γε ὀδυσσάμενος [*ōdusassamenos*] τόδ' ἱκάνω, 19.407).[56] The god-hated identity reinforces the notion that Odysseus's suffering comes from divine enmity; Autolykos's articulation implies that it comes from the suffering he brings others. While neither interpretation is proved false by the facts of the epic's narrative, this etymological wordplay reinforces a narrative where a name marks a character and potentially functions as a sign of destiny. Indeed, both interpretations are appropriate to the half of the epic in which they are most prominent: Odysseus is a suffering object of anger in the epic's first half and an agent of it in the second. In an epic where how you name yourself communicates identity, *which* potential meaning of a name is activated generates new permutations and complexity.

This etymological digression can help us understand both the peril and the potential of his story to Penelope more clearly. When *Odysseus* describes the "wooly" [*oulē*] cloak he wore to go to war (χλαῖναν πορφυρέην οὔλην ἔχε δῖος Ὀδυσσεύς, 19.225), the language echoes the later invocation of his scar (οὐλὴν [*oulēn*] ἀμφράσσαιτο καὶ ἀμφαδὰ ἔργα γένοιτο, 19.391).[57] These lexical items, differing by accent and position, echo conventional aspects of Odysseus's story as a "woolly-headed" man or as the man marked by the scar. They also recall other versions of Odysseus's name: he was called *Olytteus* in Attic inscriptions and *Oliseus* in Corinthian; later Roman authors attest to a Doric *Oulikseus* as the source for the Roman *Ulixes*.[58] The sounds at play here also recall the adjective οὖλος, "ruinous, or destructive."[59] In the *Odyssey*, however, this adjective does not appear: instead, the lexical items for "woolly" and "scar" are deployed in contrasting positions: "scar" tends to begin the line and "woolly" tends to come in the middle.[60] It is when Odysseus is revealed from his disguise, rejuvenated to a younger man with thicker hair, that "woolly" supplants the "scar" at the beginning of the line and, we might surmise, one aspect of Odysseus supplants another.[61]

While Penelope and Odysseus tease at and experiment with who this man is, was, and will be, the audience also is enjoined through their

conversations and wordplay to consider the many possible iterations of *this* man. If name is destiny, then interpreting the meaning of a name may amount to an attempt to wrest control of agency. Odysseus continues with wordplay, as he tells Penelope not to cry (19.262–79):

ὦ γύναι αἰδοίη Λαερτιάδεω Ὀδυσῆος,
μηκέτι νῦν χρόα καλὸν ἐναίρεο μηδέ τι θυμὸν
τῆκε πόσιν γοόωσα. νεμεσσῶμαί γε μὲν οὐδέν·
καὶ γάρ τίς τ' ἀλλοῖον ὀδύρεται ἄνδρ' ὀλέσασα
κουρίδιον, τῷ τέκνα τέκῃ φιλότητι μιγεῖσα,
ἢ Ὀδυσῆ', ὅν φασι θεοῖσ' ἐναλίγκιον εἶναι.
ἀλλὰ γόου μὲν παῦσαι, ἐμεῖο δὲ σύνθεο μῦθον·
νημερτέως γάρ τοι μυθήσομαι οὐδ' ἐπικεύσω,
ὡς ἤδη Ὀδυσῆος ἐγὼ περὶ νόστου ἄκουσα
ἀγχοῦ, Θεσπρωτῶν ἀνδρῶν ἐν πίονι δήμῳ,
ζωοῦ· αὐτὰρ ἄγει κειμήλια πολλὰ καὶ ἐσθλά,
αἰτίζων ἀνὰ δῆμον. ἀτὰρ ἐρίηρας ἑταίρους
ὤλεσε καὶ νῆα γλαφυρὴν ἐνὶ οἴνοπι πόντῳ,
Θρινακίης ἄπο νήσου ἰών· ὀδύσαντο γὰρ αὐτῷ
Ζεύς τε καὶ Ἠέλιος· τοῦ γὰρ βόας ἔκταν ἑταῖροι.
οἱ μὲν πάντες ὄλοντο πολυκλύστῳ ἐνὶ πόντῳ·
τὸν δ' ἄρ' ἐπὶ τρόπιος νηὸς βάλε κῦμ' ἐπὶ χέρσου,
Φαιήκων ἐς γαῖαν, οἳ ἀγχίθεοι γεγάασιν·

"Revered wife of *Ody*sseus, son of Laertes,
Don't harm your fair skin any longer nor wear out your heart
mourning your husband. I don't think this is wrong, certainly
For someone mourns [*oduretai*] when she has lost [*olesasa*] a different man,
A husband, one she has slept with and borne children to, Different from *Ody*sseus, one they say is like the gods.
But cease from mourning, take my speech to heart:
For I will speak truly and I will hide nothing.
Since I have already heard [*akousa*] about the homecoming of *Ody*sseus
Nearby, in the rich land of the Thesprotian men,
Alive. He brought many fine possession there,
Making requests throughout the country. But his faithful companions,
He lost [*olese*] them along with his hollow ship on the wine-faced sea
As he traveled from the island of Thrinakia. They were hateful

[*odusanto*] to him,
Zeus and Helios. For his companions killed Helios' cows.
They all perished [*olonto*] on the stormy sea.
But the wave threw him as he rode on the keel of the ship to land,
The land of the Phaeacians, who are a race close to the gods."

Note how close this false story of Odysseus comes to the true one presented by the epic. In this speech, Odysseus clearly blends plot elements from the tale he told the Phaeacians with the tale he has recently told Eumaios about the Thesprotians: here, he tells of an Odysseus whose men all perished at Thrinakia thanks to Zeus and Helios, a hero who was also rescued by the Phaeacians. This collapses and emends his tale in interesting ways, but it also leaves in ellipsis certain ideas about responsibility (see above). From a close reading, it is tempting to believe that Odysseus himself is coding his language in such a way as to reveal his identity to Penelope by sounding out elements of his name. Rather than assume she does not read his code, I suggest entertaining the possibility that Penelope doubts or hesitates because of Odysseus's mixed message.[62] Also, we should imagine the audience sensing different resonances for Odysseus's name. Odysseus names himself in the narrative as the son of Laertes and Penelope as his wife—so his identity takes it one step closer to reunion. But he introduces sounds that recall other ancient forms of his name, *Olutteus*, *Oliseus*, or *Oluseus*. Penelope, defined in large part by her husband, is characterized by what she has lost [*olesasa*] and by weeping [*oduretai*]; this version of Odysseus too is defined by the loss of his men [*olese*] and by the hatred of the gods [*odusanto*]. This hero, the one marked by the scar, is positioned as someone still in the distance, still separate. The story Odysseus tells, which starts with a prohibition against mourning, represents an enigmatic knitting together of different narrative selves. The sound of his name, which he contemplates and offers as another sign of who he is, introduces a sonic uncertainty, echoing the incompletion and even danger of his character.

In his story to Penelope, Odysseus focuses less on his lies—which still project a self not wholly dissimilar to the man we witness—and more on telling the tale of himself. In each of his tales, in fact, he talks about himself in a manner that progressively unites the Odysseus prior to the Trojan War with the *Odysseus* who has come home. This process is echoed in the recognition scenes as well, where in partnership with others

Odysseus tells, hears, or otherwise confirms external signs that integrate a greater degree of correspondence—those real-world facts—into the cohering version of "Odysseus." Athena helps him rediscover the contours of his country; Eurykleia reminds him—and the audience—of his past through the scar; Penelope and Odysseus agree to recognize each other through the bed; and Laertes and Odysseus together take part in the story of their family in their tour of the trees. Odysseus's lies are a telling part of his internal quest for a self whose understanding of the world allows him to take action within it, but his identity remains unconfirmed without the recognition of his family and members of the household.

In discussing Odysseus's coded conversation with Penelope, I emphasized the ways in which the hero might be presenting, selecting, and signaling aspects of his identity to his wife and the external audience through allusion and wordplay, echoing non-Epic versions of his name *Ouly-sseus* with references to his (false) death, the (true) loss of his men, his "woolly" hair, and the sign of the scar (*oulē*). The *Odyssey* provides one more opportunity for wordplay with these sounds in Book 24. When Dolios greets Odysseus, he uses a word that occurs only once in extant Homeric poetry (a *hapax legomenon*) and says "Be well [*oule*] and be of great cheer. May the gods give you blessings" (οὖλέ τε καὶ μέγα χαῖρε, θεοὶ δέ τοι ὄλβια δοῖεν, 24.402). A scholion traces this rare form—which occurs in the same position as the words for "wool" and "scar" above—to the common adjective *holos* ("whole").[63] This benediction may serve as a subtle indication of the "completeness" of Odysseus's journey and identity—if it does not communicate that he is whole, it indicates that he should hope to be. Secondarily, by recalling the earlier wordplay and his other name, it implies that this Odysseus is the *whole* Odysseus—even if he is still problematic and the audience knows that his journeys are not over.

In this chapter I have emphasized that the epic depicts Odysseus using his false narratives on multiple levels, both to achieve actions in the epic's plot and to develop a sense of a self that allows him to take these actions. His reconfigurations of past events into new stories illustrate how any person can reconsider what has gone before and write new self-narratives. What a survey of the lies leaves out, however, is that Odysseus—and any other person—remains to a degree false unless audiences find him authentic. So, while the epic features its hero cleverly using lies to achieve success in his revenge and return plot, it does not leave narrative coherence to be prized alone. Instead, Odysseus cannot return to his real self without the collaboration of others. His recognition scenes are, as I

mentioned above, moments of partnership where his identity is confirmed by others through a process akin to correspondence in memory: in each case, both parties involved point back to a fact from the past, agree upon its relevance and persistence, and embrace it as a guide to who Odysseus is and who they are to each other. Correspondence and coherence are in a binary rather than a polar relationship, and the primacy of one must often be exchanged for the other. What the process of Odysseus's return tells its audiences is that confabulation and narrative manipulation are necessary but insufficient for a full human identity.

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1 For Odysseus' waking as returning him to the "real" world, see Nagy 2001, 86; for this return as marking the end of the Heroic age, see Martin 1993.

2 Underwood (2018:118–23) argues that the control of *mythos* is a demonstration of *mētis* and leads to the emergence of agency.

3 For a survey of the recognition scenes and their common elements (disguise, conversation, tests, revealing, doubt, the furnishing of a sign, final recognition, and a turn to business) see Emlyn-Jones 1984:6–7; cf. Roisman 1990 (especially for recognition with Eumaios, 218–24).

4 For Odysseus's "blending of facts, falsehoods, and half-truths that either function paradigmatically or parallel Odysseus's actual experience," see Zerba 2009:326; cf. de Jong 2001:326–32. For instrumentalization of the narrative, see Most 1989a:132; Emlyn-Jones 1986 views this as the emergence of Odysseus's *mētis*.

5 For other possible versions of the *Odyssey* in Odysseus' tales, see Reece 1994; for their function in structuring this epic, see Fenik 1974:28–30. Austin (1975:165–68) and Rose (1980) position the conversation with Eumaios as an important step in Odysseus's reintegration into society; cf. King 1999.

6 On the importance of the communalization of grief, see Shay 1995:39–40; and 2002:172–173.

7 See Fernyhough (2012:201) for the way the traumatized mind is like that of a young child.

8 For how Odysseus's stories (throughout the epic) effect a "narrative memory of the past," which "reveals how the pain of personal suffering and loss can become a way of coping with the mortality to which all humans are by nature exposed" see Zerba 2009:315; cf. Thalmann 1984:161–64 and Mackie 1997.

9 Cf. Wilson 2014:51: "Conscious mental life is built entirely from confabulation. It is a constant review of stories experienced in the past and competing stories invented for the future."

10 Conway surveys neuroimaging studies and suggests that episodic memory is an earlier adaptation in human cognitive development. The system of coherence is "knowledge based and conceptually organized." He argues that the anatomical locations of these memory types are separate (2005:621–22).

11 For episodic memory, see Rubin 2006, who similarly notes the importance of narrative and coherence for the organization of memory; cf. Fernyhough 2011:239. For the application of this material to Homeric composition, see Minchin 2001.

12 For performance preferring balance to strict truth as a feature of the rhetorical tradition, see Emlyn-Jones 1982:2. For poetry and lying in Homer and Greek culture, see Pratt 1993, especially Chapter 2 on Odysseus.

13 See Nagy 1990, chap. 3 for a discussion of Hesiod's passage and the *Odyssey*. He suggests that the "truth" here is that of a Panhellenic tradition ultimately unavailable to a single poet. For the relationship between Hesiodic "autobiography" and this passage, see Most 1993, 74–75; against this positive take, see Nagy 2009. For the close affinity between competition and lying, see González 2015, 236–266. Cf. Nagy 2010b for a discussion of the meaning of *homoios* and the importance of localized and generalized perspectives in things that seem like the truth; and Heiden 2007 for an overview of different translators approaches to this passage.

14 See de Jong 2001, 327: "All Odysseus's lying tales consist of a mixture of fact and fiction, which enhances their plausibility"; cf. Saïd 2011:184–85.

15 See Aristotle's *Poetics* 1451b1–6 on poetry and history; cf. Walcot (1977:9) on Odysseus's lies as "a way of revealing truth on another level."

16 Haft notes importantly that when grouped together the lies have a chronological pattern that appears to reflect on sequentially ordered phases of Odysseus's life (1983:302).

17 See the Introduction and Zunshine 2006:6; Palmer 2010:10.

18 See Hutto 2008:22–39.

19 For the critical nature of the reunion scene, Wender 1978:57–59; cf. Russo, Fernandez-Galiano, and Heubeck 1992:397: rather than testing or mocking his father, Odysseus is trying to ready him for recognition. Not everyone agrees: see Page 1955:122 (for Odysseus's cruelty and linguistic objections); Erbse 1972:97–109; Moulton 1975:163–64; Fenik 1974:47–50; Wender 1978:45; de Jong 2001:576. For this scene's connection to Homeric poetics, see Henderson 1997; Purves 2010, 225–226; and Barker and Christensen 2019. For this scene in the pattern of recognition scenes, see Roisman 1990:236–38.

20 For the delaying of Odysseus's naming in general, see Higbie 1995:170–75; cf. Chapter 4.

21 Earlier, Eurykleia uses the phrase "descendants of Arkesios" to refer to Laertes and Telemachus (γονὴν Ἀρκεισιάδαο, 4.755). In Book 14, Eumaios fears that the suitors wish to make "the race of godly Arkesios unknown" (νώνυμον ἐξ Ἰθάκης Ἀρκεισίου ἀντιθέοιο, 182) and Telemachus mentions him prominently when he describes the three generations of single sons descended from Arkesios (16.117–20). For this passage as encapsulating the "functions of patronymics and genealogies in Homer," see Higbie 1995:147; cf. 176 for the epic's end with the three standing together to fight as a fulfillment of the three generational image.

22 Roisman (1990:237–38) argues that Odysseus cannot reveal himself immediately to his father and is required to provide two proofs of his identity to secure his full trust.

23 On the thematic importance of Telemachus' genealogy in Book 16, see Barker and Christensen 2018.

24 For Apheidas, see Peradotto 1990:144 and Higbie 1995:186n. 64; cf. Kanavou (2015, 103–4) who suggests that *Poly-pēmon* might also be a gloss for a man of many possessions.

25 Eust. Comm. ad Hom. *Od*. II 324 "He says that he is the son of Apheidas ["unsparing"] because he wants to emphasize his own liberality and great gift-giving ... . The name Epēritos is similar to "contentious" [*perimakhētos*] and comes from "to engage in strife" [*erizō*] since Odysseus was this way to all and was "conversant in the ways of men," or it is

because he fostered the good strife. Note that by analogy *epērisios* ought to be similar to *amphērisios*, but it has reomoved a sigma for the sake of the dactyl. This happens also in the phrase *nērthiton oros* and *euktiton* [well-built] and *euktimenēn* ["well-built"] and others. This is the same type of composition we find in Epēritos." Cf. Kanavou (2015:104) who adds that the name might also mean "the chosen one" (*eparitos*).

26 For lies as a tool of the deceptive mind, see Zerba 2009:325; Pucci 1987:98-109; Pratt 1993:55–94.

27 See Emlyn-Jones (1986:8) for the changes in Odysseus's stories, demonstrating that "story can be used by the teller to convey subtly facts about himself and different aspects of his personality, as well as to convey warnings and suggest paradigms of behavior."

28 Cf. Walcot 1977:9–12; Haft 1984 (for the Cretan elements); and Higbie 1995:170–71; and de Jong 2001:596–97). For a concise discussion of all of Odysseus's lying tales with bibliography, see de Jong 2001:326–28; cf. Alden 2017:263–91.

29 For how the Cretan tales reflecting prior versions of the *Odyssey*, see Reece 1994:158–59; and 166–72; cf. Haft 1984; Nagy 1990, 44-46 for the Cretan tales as localized versions, and Levaniouk 2011, chapter 1 for correlations between character, addressee, and story.

30 See Olson (1995:120–39) for an examination of how the stories told to and by Eumaios anticipate and reinforce the major the themes of the epic's second half and Odysseus's actual return to his household; cf. Roisman (1990:224) for how "[i]n the Eumaeus episode Odysseus similarly draws attention to his true identity without revealing himself openly."

31 Expressions of divine control or "theodicy" are less frequent (e.g. 14.268–70) and conspicuous when absent: there is *no* such statement in 13 to Athena. We also find expressions of personal vulnerability or dependence in contrast with expressions of strong agency, e.g. 14.305–10. His decision to go to raid is displaced onto his *thumos* (θυμὸς ἀνώγει, 249).

32 On the frequent absence of Idomeneus in the other Cretan lies, see Haft 1983:291–93.

33 Schol. HQ ad *Od*. 13. 320–23: "These lines are inauthentic. First, instead of 'my thoughts' it has 'his thoughts,' which is third person and the poet always attends to the difference in these things. The second problem is that [Odysseus] attributes his rescue to the gods when Athena is present. The third and fourth are that he did not know that the goddess appeared to him among the Phaeacians ... ."

34 As Saïd (2011:186) notes, after his first story to Eumaios, both the events in the epic and those in his "lies" are closer to the "real" Odysseus's experiences.

35 See de Jong (2001:353–57) for an overview of this speech and its structure; cf. Alden 2017, 273–77.

36 See the discussion on divine and human collaboration in Table 2.1 in Chapter 2. Cf. Teffeteller 2003.

37 Schol. ad Hom. *Od*. 14.288.

38 For King, this presentation of the Cretan hero as "helpless" amounts to a "subtle critique against the tradition of heroism enshrined in the *Iliad* (1999:87); this echoes 9.213–15 (85).

39 See de Jong (2001:428–29) for the structure of this speech and how it is a "highly abbreviated version of the story he told Eumaeus."

40 We do find, as mentioned above, echoes of the *Apologoi* in 13.258–70 .For correlation in details between the *Apologoi* and the story in 13, see Walcot 1977:13. For correlations

throughout the lies and the *Apologoi*, see Alden 2017:266–69.

41 For the beggar identity as allowing Odysseus to be a trickster and a hero who suffers, see Cook 2009:129. See Rankine 2011 for a thorough analysis of Odysseus adoption of the an enslaved person's persona.

42 This passage has more in common with the *Iliad* than others, see Saïd 2011:185.

43 See Nagy 1999:42–58 for rivalry between heroic traditions of Achilles and Odysseus.

44 Cf. Scholia V ad. *Od*. 13.267 "He explains that he killed Idomeneus's son so they the suitors will accept him as an enemy of dear Odysseus. He says that he has sons in Crete because he will have someone who will avenge him. He says that the death of Orsilokhos was for booty, because he is showing that he would not yield to this guy bloodlessly. He says that he trusted Phoenicians so that he may not do him wrong, once he has reckoned that they are the most-greedy for profit and they spared him."

45 King (1999, 81–83) sees the Cretan figure as an evocation of "the greatest of the Greek heroes" and a caricature. For similarities between the Cretan character and Odysseus, see Walcot 1977, 14.

46 For Newton 2015:270 "the beggar confirms for Eumaios that marauders who succumb to excess do indeed bring on their own ruin."

47 For the contrast in tales providing more sympathy for the plight of the victims in Book 14's rendition, see Emlyn-Jones 1986:6.

48 Newton argues differently that Odysseus's narrative resolves the "adversarial relationship between raiding and hospitality" by focusing on the excess of the men (2015:271). King suggests that "Odysseus's tale invents and vividly depicts a hero who aspires to the ideal of the *other* great Homeric epic (or epic tradition) and therefore serves as a countertype to the hero of the *Odyssey*" (1999:80).

49 For a fine comparison of the storms in Books 12 and 14, see King 1999:851 cf. Emlyn-Jones 1986:4.

50 For this parallel, see King 1999:87; cf. Fenik 1974:168–170; and Austin 2017.

51 See Emlyn-Jones (1986:7) for this as a moral story for the suitors; cf. Alden 2017:283–88.

52 For Eumaios as a foil to the suitors, see Newton 2015:257 and bibliography.

53 For the Cretan tales as being truer to the *Odyssey*'s proem than the rest of the poem, see Reece 1994:159.

54 Cook (2012:88–89) explores light imagery in Homer and sees this name as part of a pattern that signals Odysseus's imminent return. See Higbie 1995:186n.57; cf. Kanavou 2015:102. Levaniouk suggests that the name may also connote longing and imply an aggressive and dangerous agent (2011:36–42).

55 Cf. Peradotto 1990:129–34; Kanavou 2015:90–101. For word-play and Odysseus's name, including grief and *dus*-compounds, see Louden 1995:34–37. For etymology and inscriptional evidence, see Bromer 1982-1982 and Wachter 2001:265–68; cf. Bader 2009, 108–110.

56 For the multidirectional valence of hate associated with Odysseus, see Cook 1999.

57 For the etymology of "wool," see Chaintraine, s.v. οὖλος 2: "Le sense ancient de οὖλος 'bouclé, crépu' ['curled, frizzy'] se tire aisément de 2 εἰλέω 'tourner, rouler' ..."; cf. Beekes s.v. οὖλος, "frizzy, shaggy, woolly, crinkly" can be connected with εἰλέω 2 'to roll, turn

wind' ..." We may reconstruct **uol(H)-no* 'wool,' either from **uel* "to twist' or **uelH-* 'to pluck' (Lat. *Vello*). Chantraine s.v. οὐλή, "cicatrice, blessure, cicatrisée. From *ϝολ-. Cf. lat *volnus*"; cf. Beekes s.v οὐλή, "scarred wound, scar,"< IE *uel- "draw, tear."

58 See Brill's *New Pauly* s.v Odysseus: Attic inscriptions: Ὀλυττεύς/Olytteús; Corinthian: Ὀλισ(σ) εύς/Olis(s)eús; cf. Herodian, *de prosodia cath*. 3.1.14: Οὐλιξεύς Ulixes, in quo Doris sequimur; Eusth. *Comm. ad Homeri Il*. 1.446: ὁ Ὀδυσσεύς δέ που Ὀλυσσεύς καὶ ἡ Ὀδύσσεια Ὀλύσσεια. See also Wachter 2001, §254. For discussion of this aspect of Odysseus's name, see Marót 1960; Stanford 1952; and Austin 1972.

59 Chantraine, s.v. οὖλος 3 "'perniceaux, funeste, destructeur' ... Ety. Famille ὄλλυμι, *ὄλϝος à cōte de *ὀλεϝός >ὀλοός..."; cf. Beekes, s.v. οὖλος 3 "baneful"... from IE **H3lh3-u-* "destructive."

60 19.464 οὐλὴν ὅττι πάθοι· ὁ δ' ἄρα σφίσιν εὖ κατέλεξεν; 19.507 θερσόμενος, οὐλὴν δὲ κατὰ ῥακέεσσι κάλυψε; 21.221 ὣς εἰπὼν ῥάκεα μεγάλης ἀποέργαθεν οὐλῆς; 23.74 οὐλήν, τήν ποτέ μιν σῦς ἤλασε λευκῷ ὀδόντι;· 24.331 οὐλὴν μὲν πρῶτον τήνδε φράσαι ὀφθαλμοῖσι; 4.450 ἀμφὶ δ' ἄρα χλαίνας ‖ οὔλας βάλον ἠδὲ χιτῶνας (= 10.451, 17.89); 4.299 χλαίνας τ' ἐνθέμεναι ‖ οὔλας καθύπερθεν ἔσασθαι (= 7.338).

61 "She made the *woolly hair* come from his head like a hyacinth flower." 6.230-231 κὰδ δὲ κάρητος / οὔλας ἦκε κόμας, ὑακινθίνῳ ἄνθει ὁμοίας (= 23.158).

62 For an overview of the poetics of this reunion scene and confirmation of recognition through the verb *noein* see Nagy 1990b 203-205.

63 Schol. H. ad. Hom. *Od*. 24.402 "Oule: 'be healthy,' from 'wholeness.'" Modern etymologies confirm: Chantraine s.v. οὖλος 1 'tout entier,' voir ὅλος.

6

Marginalized Agencies and Narrative Selves

χρηστοῖσι δούλοις συμφορὰ τὰ δεσποτῶν

Good slaves experience the misfortunes of their masters.

Euripides, *Bacchae* 1028

In the last chapter, I examined how forces of correspondence and coherence in memory help create different versions of Odysseus as he reconstructs his identity in Ithaca. Generally, the conversational function of Odysseus's dialogues following his return home has been underemphasized in deference to their instrumental use in the advancement of the plot and his symbolic reintegration into society.[1] But these speeches also have a therapeutic impact in allowing Odysseus—and the audience vicariously—to contemplate the interdependencies of self, stories about the self, and a sense of agency. Where Telemachus, as discussed in Chapter 2, only just learns to see himself as a narrative subject or agent, Odysseus demonstrates that learning to control a narrative is a central part of developing a sense of agency and that worldviews can be rehabilitated through speech.

One note of caution is that such a therapeutic framework does not fully account for the real-world effect of stories like Odysseus's. Individual and cultural narratives are communal. Narratives require communities to exist; but, as discourse, stories also shape those who hear them. As I discuss in the introduction, language and discourse are the material of Durkheim's "collective consciousness" and facilitate human participation in what Clark and Chalmers have called "the extended mind" (1998). Through this interconnection, we can capitalize upon collective narratives and experiences for individual ends. Indeed, in his lying tales, Odysseus

shows quite clearly that he is capable of reading other people and understanding their interests and motivations. In recent years, the representation of such an ability in a character and the assumption of such a skill on the part of the creator of a story have been identified as a primary locus for the exploration of social and group minds. For Lisa Zunshine, the ability to ascribe to someone else "a certain mental state on the basis of her observable action" (2006:6)—what she calls "mind-reading"—is both an essential skill for "construct[ing] and navigat[ing] our social environment" and a foundational quality for the creation of fiction and literature.[2] Such an ability is in part what makes Odysseus a great story-teller and a narrative agent; but it also allows him to subjugate and use others. In particular, his narrative agency allows him to instrumentalize the members of his household, including his wife and his son.

So, another opportunity to explore Homeric folk psychology—the implicit understanding of the workings of human minds reflected in the epics—is to consider not just the way that narrative is used to disclose a sense of self in the world, but also how the epic portrays narrative's part in creating or shaping communities. In particular, we must also contend with the use of narrative against or within a community by an individual. We could re-read the lies discussed in Chapter 5 as the epic showing how Odysseus capitalizes on existing species of cultural discourse in overlapping efforts both to re-envision himself as an agent on Ithaca and to achieve his homecoming through subterfuge. As part of this narrative experimentation, Odysseus manipulates his surroundings through the persona of a figure who appears passive, dependent, and vulnerable. Such characteristics play upon cultural expectations about age, the body, and social position to allow Odysseus to use one type of culturally valorized excellence (his intelligence), as opposed to others. As I will emphasize further in this chapter, Odysseus—and his epic—navigate a tension in heroic/mythic discourse between ability of mind (*mētis*) and body (*biē*) to establish him as a different kind of hero.

My examination of the power of narrative in Homer remains incomplete without also considering how stories are suppressed or reshaped to allow Odysseus to tell his, as well as the lives whose futures are foreclosed to make his *nostos* possible. As Lillian Doherty has written, we cannot merely enjoy the *Odyssey* for its aesthetic value "because the *Odyssey* itself has a political dimension, if we simply affirm the value of the poem without examining that dimension, we risk ratifying the status hierarchies, including gender and class hierarchies, which the poems

embody" (2001:126–27). This manipulation of discourse by the epic and its protagonist highlights another aspect of Homeric psychology: that, even though the *Odyssey* recognizes the importance of a sense of agency and self-narration for a successful navigation of one's own story, it also limits *what kinds of people* enjoy the fruits of such well-being. Careful reading of the *Odyssey*, therefore, must necessarily expose the harmful impact of dominant cultural narratives on marginalized people.

In the next three chapters I will move away from considering the *Odyssey*'s reflections on the function of a single person's mind to examining the effects of a narrative agent on the community and the people upon whom he relies to complete his story. In this chapter, I will consider the impact that the epic's projected narratives of agency has on those who are not the returning hero, in particular, on the enslaved people who make up a significant part of Odysseus's world. I will employ frameworks and insights from Disability Studies in an attempt to understand the general impact of Homeric discourse on the people represented within the narrative and its possible impact on audiences outside of it. I will argue that the *Odyssey* ultimately uses the authorizing force of cultural discourse to marginalize, to dehumanize, and even to render certain types of violence acceptable. After outlining some basic concepts from the field of Disability Studies appropriate to Homer, I will explain how this framework informs the way slaves, in particular, are treated by the *Odyssey* and, especially, provides structural and cultural motivations for the mutilation of Melanthios and the hanging of the enslaved women. In particular, Disability Studies illustrate how certain characters and bodies are marginalized to define an ideological center and how this marginalization relies on cultural processes of infantilization and vilification.

A. Marginalized Voices and Disability Studies

Homeric epic and the central figure of the *Odyssey* present engrossing and enchanting narratives. But this enchantment is not a simple force for good. Indeed, the epic itself shows its characters suffering harm from listening to stories. If we accept that epic represents cultural discourse, then its impacts upon its audiences—even to this day—must have potential for both good and ill. This is especially the case if we include the ideological content and frame of the epic's projected world, which is oligarchic and enforces a world view that prizes the value and

accomplishment of some human beings far and above others. This is, of course, not a new observation. George Orwell, for example, writes in his *Looking Back on the Spanish Civil War* of his own anxiety about "those hundreds of millions of slaves on whose backs civilization rested generation after generation [who] have left behind them no record whatever" (1966:238). Reading the *Odyssey* today also brings the responsibility of recognizing to what extent this canonized force has contributed to the silencing of these nameless generations of enslaved people and, unmentioned by Orwell, women. Indeed, such marginalization based on gender and social position occurs throughout the epic in ways we often fail to notice—Kassandra's rape is silenced by the poem and Odysseus's sister Ktimenē is barely mentioned.[3] One overlooked moment helps to illustrate the extent of such marginalization. In Book 20, Odysseus goes outside to pray for a sign from Zeus and he asks, "let someone gathered within utter my fame and let some other sign of Zeus appear without" (20.100–1). Zeus thunders, then the narrator moves to the perspective of an unnamed enslaved woman (20.105–21):

φήμην δ' ἐξ οἴκοιο γυνὴ προέηκεν ἀλετρὶς
πλησίον, ἔνθ' ἄρα οἱ μύλαι εἵατο ποιμένι λαῶν.
τῇσιν δώδεκα πᾶσαι ἐπερρώοντο γυναῖκες
ἄλφιτα τεύχουσαι καὶ ἀλείατα, μυελὸν ἀνδρῶν·
αἱ μὲν ἄρ' ἄλλαι εὗδον, ἐπεὶ κατὰ πυρὸν ἄλεσσαν,
ἡ δὲ μί' οὔ πω παύετ', ἀφαυροτάτη δὲ τέτυκτο·
ἥ ῥα μύλην στήσασα ἔπος φάτο, σῆμα ἄνακτι·
"Ζεῦ πάτερ, ὅς τε θεοῖσι καὶ ἀνθρώποισιν ἀνάσσεις,
ἦ μεγάλ' ἐβρόντησας ἀπ' οὐρανοῦ ἀστερόεντος,
οὐδέ ποθι νέφος ἐστί· τέρας νύ τεῳ τόδε φαίνεις.
κρῆνον νῦν καὶ ἐμοὶ δειλῇ ἔπος, ὅττι κεν εἴπω·
μνηστῆρες πύματόν τε καὶ ὕστατον ἤματι τῷδε
ἐν μεγάροισ' Ὀδυσῆος ἑλοίατο δαῖτ' ἐρατεινήν,
οἳ δή μοι καμάτῳ θυμαλγέϊ γούνατ' ἔλυσαν
ἄλφιτα τευχούσῃ· νῦν ὕστατα δειπνήσειαν."
ὣς ἄρ' ἔφη, χαῖρεν δὲ κλεηδόνι δῖος Ὀδυσσεὺς
Ζηνός τε βροντῇ· φάτο γὰρ τείσασθαι ἀλείτας.

A woman, a corn grinder from a house nearby, released a sound
where the mills were set for the shepherd of the host.
There were twelve women working there at them
making the barley and the wheat meal, men's marrow.

The others were sleeping, since they had finished grinding their grain.
But she alone was not yet stopping, since she was the weakest.
But then she stopped her mill and spoke, a sign for her master.
...
"Zeus, father, you who rule over the gods and mortals,
how you have thundered clearly from the starry sky
but there is nowhere a cloud! You must be showing someone a sign.
Now grant to wretched me this word which I speak:
May they take their last and final lovely feast
This day in the halls of Odysseus.
These men who are killing me with soul-crushing labor,
as I make their meal. Let them dine their last dinner."
So she spoke and Odysseus took pleasure in the speech
and the thunder. For he believed that he would pay the guilty back.

This scene is a metonym for the narrative's instrumentalization of marginalized peoples in the service of its hero's homecoming. Here, we find the weakest of the enslaved women, working alone into the early morning hours. She is a vehicle to provide Odysseus delight in confirming that someone is thinking of him, but she also functions as an additional confirmation of the terrible character of the suitors. This scene provides a voyeuristic glimpse into the misery of her life and the pointed revelation that Odysseus's return might make her life better. But her suffering is only worth mentioning as far as it contributes to Odysseus's glory.

While others have very capably explored the ideological forces at play in the depiction of slaves and women in the *Odyssey* from Marxist and feminist perspectives (Peter Rose, William Thalmann, Lillian Doherty, among others), these studies at times struggle to relate the various peoples marginalized to the larger story.[4] Frameworks from Disability Studies can help address how dominant discourse deprives marginalized peoples of a sense of agency and personhood.[5] Disability Studies provides a frame that embraces difference based on class, gender, and physical ability, allowing us, on the one hand, to observe the way the epic similarly treats what we may see as distinct groups and exposing, on the other hand, a thematic treatment of the body that responds to Greek epic discourse. This is important for a book that looks at the folk psychology of the *Odyssey*, because it gives us insight into how epic narrative anticipates that minds are shaped by its values and, moreover, explores *which* minds matter most.

There are significant challenges to and problems with this approach. Anachronism is one objection, as is the obfuscations of subjectivities in

both representation and reception. Can we posit that Homer faithfully represents marginalized voices? No. But even if we only see them as representative products of dominant ideology, we can learn something about the normative behaviors projected upon its audiences.[6] Let me proceed rather broadly with themes that have emerged from the field of Disability Studies before proposing some specific trends that apply to the *Odyssey*.

The field of Disability Studies has developed within post-modern literary theory as an exploration and contestation of the depiction of disabled bodies in culture and art. A central tenet of the field is that disability is a "constructed category of discursive investment"; this means that what we consider normal or abled is a function of cultural ideology and social relationships of power.[7] The mimetic power of narrative, moreover, shapes our perceptions and values and perpetuates the stigmas that are constitutive of power dynamics.[8]

One initial confusion is whether or not we must talk directly about *disabled bodies* to use these approaches. As Michael Bérubé has recently argued, the structural and symbolic impact of disability within a culture means that the insight of disability studies can be profitably applied when characters are not visibly disabled (2016:19). Disability Studies can effectively illuminate the relationships between power and people marginalized for reasons of sex, gender, and race as well, in part because it has developed out of intersecting approaches in these fields.[9] Across these categories, monstrosity and disability are the symbolic contours used to bring normalcy into relief.[10]

When considering the shaping of individual and group senses of agency and self, my primary concern for Homeric epic is the psychological effect that abling discourse can have on individuals and groups by reinforcing and perpetuating stereotypes. The first is one of sublimation: members of marginalized groups are conditioned to value themselves in terms evoked by and dictated by the center. One personal cost in life and literature is that to be granted fully human status, the disabled must cater to the concerns of the abled (Thomson 1997:13). The second is that such discourse both marks marginal characteristics as negative and as determined by outside forces. Culturally, disability—symbolically extended to being a slave or a woman—is figured as being externally imposed: it is inflicted upon people. Prevailing attitudes about disabled peoples' relationships with their disability are dictated not by disabled people but by those outside the group, who emphasize adjustment to disabilities and the idea of overcoming them. Overcoming

puts the burden on the individual rather than the group.[11] Thus, disabled individuals are positioned paradoxically as being victims of fate or misfortune, but also uniquely and solely responsible for overcoming it. One result of these currents in cultural discourse in literature is that people who are marginalized by disability often function as instruments and objects, and as such they are denied "any opportunity for subjectivity or agency" (Thomson 1997:10). In culture and art, the disabled are often stereotyped through "language that conveys passivity and victimization" (Linton 1998:23).[12] Such a problematic relationship with agency surfaces in the *Odyssey* as part of its reflections on determinism. The expectations put upon disabled people to *overcome* or *deal with* their disability is an extreme application of the principle of divine and human cooperation I outlined in Chapters 2 and 3.

Culturally dominant narratives attempt to reassert control over deviations through symbolic or actual mutilation.[13] Marginalized bodies are symbols of a lack of control and a perversion of normative values. While there has been good work on the function of monstrosity and the uncivilized in defining certain Hellenic values, there has been less critical reflection on the discursive use of bodies.[14] I am not concerned with arguing whether there is evidence for disability in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*—I think there clearly is—but ultimately in considering how this representation is reproduced through dominant discourse. For me, the *Odyssey*'s marginalized bodies are those that are non-heroic and in some way transgressive: bodies afflicted by age, sickness, marked as different because of gender, set aside as non-heroic because of slavery, or sidelined from a potential heroic life for similar reasons. In their depiction they are denied subjectivity and agency. In the *Odyssey*, agency is about narrative control and control over narrative: *real heroes* are agents, even if they also must suffer and endure as well. As discussed in Chapter 4, from the perspective of modern clinical psychology, someone with an "internal state" mentality believes that their character is of a stable kind and that they cannot change themselves or their surroundings; someone who achieves an "intentional state" understands how to use narrative to alter their own behavior and increase their sense of agency. But when the marginalized—who are supposed to be passive and act like victims—act with agency, they are vilified (see Linton 1998:99–101). Representing individuals as passive, depriving them of agency over self and world, constrains whether or not they *count* as fully realized human beings.

When it comes to the depiction of marginalized figures in the *Odyssey*, as I hope to show, those who are depicted positively adhere to stereotypes

of passivity and infantilization, while those who transgress their normative bounds are violently mutilated. In exposing these values, the *Odyssey* could itself be argued to be subversive. As Mitchell and Snyder suggest for modern works of literature: "This disruption of a reader's identification with fictional ideals of normalcy through encounters with 'transgressive disabilities' provides an unusual opportunity to rechart a period's fashioning of the meaning of disability."[15] Indeed, Thomson argues that art can function to address stereotypes and stigmas of disability and break down the naturalness of the marginalized bodies to validate individual experience and agency. Although I would not deny epic's ability to do either, I suspect that the *Odyssey* countermands both strategies in order to reassert its own hierarchies.

The use of marginal characters to define the center is generically crucial to the *Odyssey* as an ethnographic narrative.[16] The epic defines by distinction: civilized from uncivilized, normal from abnormal. In exploring what is necessary to establish what it means to be human, the marginalized are there to define what Odysseus is not.[17] The treatment of human bodies and selves, moreover, has political as well as psychological force. As Peter Rose (2012) has argued, the ideology of the *Odyssey* is not simply pro- or anti-aristocratic, instead it is a more subtle construct produced by and for heterogeneous audiences. The poem can be said to challenge the claim of a leisure-class aristocracy entitled by birth in favor of a meritocracy. But this meritocracy can only be limited; it preserves a still more-or-less rigid hierarchy, in the form of downward mobility or fate, that allows excellence and achievement only to a very few. So, those who can perform as individuals and agents are those who matter as human beings. In its reestablishment of Odysseus as king of Ithaca, we need to think of women and enslaved people as being *put in their position*. The determinism Odysseus can struggle against through his own abilities is reinforced for those who at best can only be *good versions* of women and slaves.[18]

B. Disability Studies and Homeric Epic

A full exploration of the applicability of disability studies to Homer would start with the physiognomic values deployed in the *Iliad* through Thersites and then move to Odysseus as a locus himself, especially in his speeches in *Odyssey* 8 and his symbolic relationship with Hephaestus.[19] The *Iliad* relies on a system of meaning in which to have a beautiful body signals

having an authoritative place in a community, while having a monstrous or disabled body de-authorizes or ultimately dehumanizes a figure. Thersites provides something of a physiognomic baseline because he is described as deformed in body and disordered in behavior (*Iliad* 2.216–20). There is an accord between Thersites's physical (dis)ability and his social marginalization. Odysseus corrects the transgression of Thersites's body with violence when he beats him until he cries (*Iliad* 2.265–69).

The *Odyssey*—partly in service of the movement away from the perfections of heroic fantasy—is increasingly interested in formations and deformations of the body. At multiple times in the poem, characters recognize nobility marked by healthy stature, size, and appearance—Telemachus is, like Achilles in the *Iliad*, "big and beautiful."[20] But Odysseus's poem strives to tell a different tale. As Robert Garland notes in his treatment of disability in the ancient world, while at times there is an assumption of deformed character with a deformed body, at others, disability is a sign of special ability or compensatory blessing, as in blindness of true prophecy or even the intelligence often given to the physically lame, a dynamic well encapsulated by the god Hephaestus.[21] The *Odyssey* could be said to challenge the *Iliad*'s physiognomic strain only to replace it with a similar abling discourse by supplanting physical beauty and ability with mental function. This is seen most clearly in the epic's contemplation of Odysseus's body and the importance of his mind. According to disability studies, language and intelligence are a prosthetic reaction—a compensation—for perceived insufficiency, or disability, of the body due to trauma, misfortune, sickness, or age. In crossing the conventional boundary between physical strength (*biē*) and intelligence (*mētis*), a figure like Odysseus in the *Odyssey* may be said to contest the normative physical heroic values of swiftness and strength.[22] In the comparison of Hephaestus with Odysseus during Demodokos's song in Book 8, we find a revaluing of the slow as intelligent, which refigures a disability as an ability. A type of play develops as well in the dynamics of body and ability when Odysseus is disguised once he returns to Ithaca, where his able body and mind are partially hidden through the trappings of suffering and age (13.397–403). Athena renders him *unknown* and perhaps unknowable by giving him wrinkles, ruining his hair, dressing him in rags, and dulling his eyes.[23]

In the modern industrialized world, where many enjoy historically aberrant abundance and where most of us live in largely segregated, homogenous class groups, we have fewer opportunities to read the stories that class writes on the body. But the epic acknowledges that real life

writes its narratives on all bodies: Odysseus's legs are weakened by the sea and people are transformed by lives of work. Eumaios notes the physical difference between the slaves who work in the house and those who work in the field or beggars like the disguised Odysseus (15.327–35). While Eumaios' description focuses on the grooming and the youth of these servants, it is possible to consider their comparative physical excellence as a result both of selection and environment. In this context, one could even view Odysseus's scar as an attempt to redefine deformity: it is a non-disabling marker of his fame, a physical exception to his heroic beauty that marks his exceptional difference.

The *Odyssey* shows that life experience is written on the body. In its narrative world, the absence of such signs—a type of physical perfection—is the absence of *kleos*—the lack of scars may even be considered to mark someone as non-heroic in the world of return. The perfect form of the suitors or princes among the Phaeacians is thus paradoxically a type of deformity or monstrosity because it represents men without stories, without *kleos* or the possibility of achieving it. Odysseus's physical transformation from himself to something worse and then back into a better version of himself resets the margins and center of deformity. In this framework, both mental and physical weakness are marked as signs of passivity and victimization. Vitality or ability of body is replaced with that of mind—but this later ability is reserved for a dominant figure (and class) that reasserts control through and by the narrative.

This has been a brief overview of the symbolic apparatus that explores ability in Homeric epic. Let's see what happens when we apply these frameworks to the *Odyssey*'s treatment of enslaved people and women.[24] The *Odyssey* depicts a range of enslaved people in its narrative, but the central depiction of four characters bears interpretive fruit within these theoretical perspectives. Eumaios, Eurykleia, Melanthios, and Melanthō are contrasting pairs of good and bad slaves. Enslaved people are potentially viewed as animate pieces of property that can move under their own force, but should not have agency (see Thalmann 1998b). But within this dehumanization we can detect different conceptual relationships to the dominant ideology. These relationships shape their sense of agency and how their expressions of agency impact their receptions and success in the world.

C. Theme 1: Infantilization and Control, the Good

Figures

Part of the story the *Odyssey* tells about Odysseus is that revising his view of his own agency and using narrative authoritatively is key to his ability to complete his *nostos* and reunite with his family. This process confirms him as a person who matters and it affirms his place in the world. Telemachus goes through a similar process. Other figures in the epic are accordingly contrasted in reference to (1) their self-interest, (2) their sense of agency, and (3) their ability to use narrative in a manner that has an intentional impact on their world. In an epic where narrative control is everything, what one does with speech is paramount.[25]

The swineherd Eumaios repeatedly speaks with diminished self-interest and demonstrates a limited sense of his own agency and a constrained ability to instrumentalize narrative and speech. Scholars often note the deep sympathy and even similarity between Eumaios and his master (in real life and disguise), but some of these connections are those created by a scheming Odysseus.[26] Even though the epic takes pains to note that Eumaios is, in fact, noble by birth, Eumaios never uses his own patronym: his personhood and his agency are expressed in terms of his status as a slave to Odysseus.[27] He marks himself repeatedly as made distraught by Odysseus's absence (e.g., 14.37–48).[28] Where Odysseus uses his ability to imagine the experiences of the others to improve his own narrative, Eumaios is depicted as exercising empathy to be a more perfect slave, a pious servant whose code of ethics takes him beyond his mere social role. His life is one of anxiety over his master's family and diminishing estate (14.360–71), and he repeatedly expresses deferred or divine agency: while he exerts control over hospitality in his own realm, his worldview is one in which he is potentially a subject to multiple masters including capricious divinities (14.443–45).[29] He summarizes the source and intensity of this anxiety when he laments the "manner of slaves" (14.55–67):

> ... ἡ γὰρ δμώων δίκη ἐστίν,
> αἰεὶ δειδιότων, ὅτ' ἐπικρατέωσιν ἄνακτες
> οἱ νέοι. ἦ γὰρ τοῦ γε θεοὶ κατὰ νόστον ἔδησαν,
> ὅς κεν ἔμ' ἐνδυκέως ἐφίλει καὶ κτῆσιν ὄπασσεν,
> οἷά τε ᾧ οἰκῆϊ ἄναξ εὔθυμος ἔδωκεν,
> οἶκόν τε κλῆρόν τε πολυμνήστην τε γυναῖκα,
> ὅς οἱ πολλὰ κάμῃσι, θεὸς δ' ἐπὶ ἔργον ἀέξῃ,
> ὡς καὶ ἐμοὶ τόδε ἔργον ἀέξεται, ᾧ ἐπιμίμνω.

τῶ κέ με πόλλ› ὤνησεν ἄναξ, εἰ αὐτόθ› ἐγήρα·

"... This is the manner of slaves,
of those who are always afraid, when their masters lord over them,
young masters like ours. For now the gods have kept him from his homeland
the one who would have loved me in kindness
and given me possessions, a house, some land, and a much-wooed wife—
the kinds of things a well-inclined master gives to his servant
who works hard for him and then a god increases his labor.
So for me even as this labor increases over which I attend,
thus my lord would have repaid me if he grew old here."

If Odysseus's agency is secondary to the gods', Eumaios conceives of his as subordinate to the absent Odysseus's. His toil reaches no end without his master. Bereft of him, Eumaios is marginalized from life: he has no home or wife without Odysseus.

So far, I am suggesting that Eumaios has a view of his self and place in the world that makes his own initiative tertiary to divine agency and the favor of a master. He is also sidelined from sexual activity—and thus from full adulthood—in the absence of a household ruler to authorize a marriage. Let's consider again his deep empathy for Odysseus's imagined sufferings. Such infantilization is affirmed as well through his relationships with his master's family, where he calls Odysseus his older brother ("But I used to call him brother" ἀλλά μιν ἠθεῖον καλέω) and laments losing him more than his own parents (14.133–48).[30] Eumaios' identification with Odysseus is intensely personal but still rigidly hierarchical; it is what today we would consider internalized oppression. From the perspective of critical race theory as well as Disability Studies, it is not atypical for marginalized people to internalize their own oppression under the force of cultural hierarchies.[31] And such beliefs make it difficult for any change to be conceived, much less be effected. In this way, internalized oppression helps to support and enforce an internal psychological state, that mindset which sees the self as without agency and the character as without possibility of change.

The depth of a servant like Eumaios's identification with his master's needs over his own can be explained from other perspectives as well. Feminist standpoint theory, for example, also has suggested that the oppressed develop and evince a nuanced sense of empathy with their

oppressors; and further, cultural actors of privilege expect such understanding, as Sam Warner puts it: "... structural marginalization increases clarity of thought because such persons not only have access to dominant understandings but also have access to 'abnormal' or subjugated perspectives."[32] Even though he was kidnapped as a child, Eumaios feels more grief for the absence of so fine an owner than for his own experience. Such an integration into a family structure erases the obvious features of social difference—it increases the marginalization and alienation of other slaves, while concretizing Eumaios' social position: he cannot betray his 'master' because he cannot betray an older brother who has kept him so well.

For Eumaios, this personal connection extends beyond the nuclear family. He loves Odysseus's mother Antikleia because she raised him with her daughter Ktimenē and may even have loved him more, since she sent her off as a bride to Samē and kept Eumaios near (15.361–70).[33] During all of his speeches, Eumaios emphasizes that family's suffering and relativizes his own experience. In his telling of his own kidnapping (15.389–484), Eumaios showcases how he can speak clearly and with mimetic power similar to the Homeric narrator and Odysseus himself, including some of the same implicit ideological content.[34] He characterizes the wicked nurse who stole him as having sex with strange Phoenician sailors and describes his kidnapping as one of his earliest memories.[35] But Odysseus wrests control of this narrative: he confirms Eumaios's sense that the gods were in control of his captivity and then claims that it did not turn out all bad, since he has a good life as the servant of a mild man (15.495–505).[36] Eumaios says nothing in response to this. But I think this is an example of Odysseus enforcing a dominant position and thereby exerting narrative control.

The exertion of narrative control and infantilization are two strategies that are also clear in the epic's depiction of Eurykleia.[37] Before Eurykleia speaks, the narrative describes how expensive a servant she was (1.428–33), that she was purchased before sexual maturity (πρωθήβην ἔτ' ἐοῦσαν, 431), and that Laertes never had sex with her to avoid his wife's anger.[38] In isolation, this description seems a bit odd, but when combined with the sexual marginalization of Eumaios and the sexual agency of Melanthō, to be discussed shortly, it is a clear sign of what makes Eurykleia a "good" slave: her body and her voice belong to her master's family.

The effects of internalized oppression surface as well with Eurykleia, who has strong feelings about her master's family, especially Telemachus, but her emotions and their expression are always secondary to their needs.

Telemachus forces her to keep his departure secret in Book 2, and she declares that he is "our only beloved son" (μοῦνος ἐὼν ἀγαπητός, 2.361–76). When Odysseus is in the palace in disguise in Book 19, Eurykleia appears with him and Penelope (19.349–85). In a complex scene where all three figures acknowledge that *this* stranger might look like Odysseus, Eurykleia laments the harsh treatment the real Odysseus might be getting at the hands of foreign women (19.371–72). Again, any sense of a self is effaced in her concern with the experiences of those she serves. The household slaves who have mistreated this guest are characterized as "bitches," who threaten him. Her empathy, like Eumaios's, is with her master's family in and against any others whose interests might actually align with hers. Her concern here is with policing speech that disrupts the social order. When Eurykleia utters a line often associated with authoritative speech ("but come, now understand the idea I am speaking" ἀλλ' ἄγε νῦν ξυνίει ἔπος, ὅττι κεν εἴπω; cf. Martin 1989:12), it is to assert what everyone in the room (and the audience) likely knows, that this beggar looks like Odysseus. Rather than constituting a transgressive speech act in any way, this utterance is the expression of her loyalty and an identity that is based upon the people she serves. Her primary function is to name Odysseus.[39]

Indeed, in that most memorable scene from the epic, Eurykleia underlines an interest in the control of enslaved women's voices. When she recognizes Odysseus's scar and attempts to get Penelope's attention, Odysseus grabs her by the throat and threatens her (19.466–507). In her eagerness to please him (and sate what appears to be her own bloodthirst), she promises to tell Odysseus which of the women in the home were wicked and which were not (22.417–18). In turn, Odysseus questions her and tells her to be quiet and to trust him to make the decisions and the gods to guarantee it all. Just as with Eumaios, the enslaved woman's own agency and control over speech is limited. Eurykleia's protests themselves mark her not as a strong speaker but as a figure in a weak social position. As Elizabeth Minchin argues, she protests more than any other character in the *Odyssey*, but with the expectation of no effect on her addressee (2007:166).

A few more examples illustrate the extent of Eurykleia's marginalization. After the suitors have been slaughtered, Eurykleia is filled with joy, but Odysseus cuts her celebration short by commanding her not to boast and reasserting again the importance of divine agency (22.417–34). Here, he returns to the issue of the good and bad women, but it is his choice to authorize the reckoning not hers. In the first scene

in Book 23, we find Penelope also controlling her speech along with another example of internalized oppression (23.1–85).[40] Penelope accuses Eurykleia of being crazy, of mockery, and of being worthy of reproach. She also characterizes the nurse's joy as excessive, echoing Odysseus. But Eurykleia responds by internalizing violent threats in the wager of her own life on the truth of her statement ("But come, I will wager myself on this: / if I turn out to have deceived you, kill me in the worst way." ἀλλ' ἔπευ· αὐτὰρ ἐγὼν ἐμέθεν περιδώσομαι αὐτῆς, / αἴ κέν σ' ἐξαπάφω, κτεῖναί μ' οἰκτίστῳ ὀλέθρῳ, 23.78–79). Penelope remains uncertain. She too reasserts divine providence and insists that they go question Telemachus about what really happened.

D. Theme 2: Transgressive Speech and Bodies, the Bad Figures

In both the cases of Eumaios and Eurykleia, the frameworks of Disability Studies are useful to help us understand *how* these enslaved people are good. In our society, we cope with the "good" disabled by treating them like children and denying them voice, gender, agency, and sexuality. Similarly, the good slaves are prevented from being fully human, transformed into slaves from noble bodies before sexual maturity and marginalized from full adulthood by social position. Beyond the infantilization of their bodies, they also face limited narrative agency. Their desires are the imagined desires of their masters and their stories are about *them*. They lack family names, control over story, and, especially in the physical threats they face and internalize, agency over life, limb, and reproduction. Ultimately, they have internalized their own social position and echo the interests and motivations of their masters, taking part in their struggles and sufferings and viewing themselves as part of the family. In the Homeric depiction of enslaved people, we find a significant contrast with the authority and selfhood granted Odysseus. As a feature of Homeric folk psychology, this aspect of its discourse indicates its immanent shaping of minds and cultures, rather than a reflection of narrative's positive therapeutic function.

These arguments help us understand better what is "bad" or threatening about the other enslaved people. Disability Studies suggests that dominant hierarchies, when they fail to infantilize marginalized bodies, dehumanize them through segregation, mutilation, or outright

destruction. This observation and the ways in which even the good slaves are limited by epic discourse helps to explain one aspect of the end of the *Odyssey* that has long confounded me: the final treatment of Melanthios and Melanthō.[41] The former has his face mutilated, his genitals fed to dogs, and his hands and feet chopped off (22.474–77).[42] Melanthō is implicitly hanged with the rest of the enslaved women (22.446–73). The group hanging, especially repugnant to many modern audiences, partially inspired Margaret Atwood to write her *Penelopiad*.[43]

The perspective of Disability Studies explains the motivations for these mutilations as a reflex of dominant discourse. In particular, the epic's political authority re-inscribes its hierarchy on the bodies of these slaves when they transgress normative boundaries. Both Melanthios and Melanthō are shown using speech—particularly the act of rebuke—which may transgress their social position. Other women may use rebuke: for example, Penelope rebukes Eurykleia and Nausikaa reproaches her handmaidens. In these cases, they use this type of speech-act appropriately because it is aimed downward in the social hierarchy.[44] On the surface, it is clear that Melanthios and Melanthō should not rebuke Odysseus because it would transgress the normative boundaries for a slave to reproach a guest or a disguised master.[45] In short, the logic of epic is that because they *act* monstrously, they must be treated as such. When Melanthios first appears, he attacks (17.215–32):

τοὺς δὲ ἰδὼν νείκεσσεν ἔπος τ' ἔφατ' ἔκ τ' ὀνόμαζεν
ἔκπαγλον καὶ ἀεικές· ὄρινε δὲ κῆρ Ὀδυσῆος·
"νῦν μὲν δὴ μάλα πάγχυ κακὸς κακὸν ἡγηλάζει,
ὡς αἰεὶ τὸν ὁμοῖον ἄγει θεὸς ὡς τὸν ὁμοῖον.
πῇ δὴ τόνδε μολοβρὸν ἄγεις, ἀμέγαρτε συβῶτα,
πτωχὸν ἀνιηρόν, δαιτῶν ἀπολυμαντῆρα;
ὃς πολλῇς φλιῇσι παραστὰς φλίψεται ὤμους,
αἰτίζων ἀκόλους, οὐκ ἄορα οὐδὲ λέβητας.
τόν γ' εἴ μοι δοίης σταθμῶν ῥυτῆρα γενέσθαι
σηκοκόρον τ' ἔμεναι θαλλόν τ' ἐρίφοισι φορῆναι,
καί κεν ὀρὸν πίνων μεγάλην ἐπιγουνίδα θεῖτο.
ἀλλ' ἐπεὶ οὖν δὴ ἔργα κάκ' ἔμμαθεν, οὐκ ἐθελήσει
ἔργον ἐποίχεσθαι, ἀλλὰ πτώσσων κατὰ δῆμον
βούλεται αἰτίζων βόσκειν ἣν γαστέρ' ἄναλτον.
ἀλλ' ἔκ τοι ἐρέω, τὸ δὲ καὶ τετελεσμένον ἔσται·
αἴ κ' ἔλθῃ πρὸς δώματ' Ὀδυσσῆος θείοιο,
πολλά οἱ ἀμφὶ κάρη σφέλα ἀνδρῶν ἐκ παλαμάων

πλευραὶ ἀποτρίψουσι δόμον κάτα βαλλομένοιο.

When [Melanthios] saw them he reproached them,
spoke out and reproached him with violent and unseemly speech.
And stirred up Odysseus's heart.
...
"Now, really, utter and complete trash is leading filth here.
as the saying goes, the god brings like men together!
Where are you taking this platelicker, you sad little swineherd,
this annoying beggar, a defiler of feasts?
He is the kind of man who stands and leans
his shoulders on many a doorframe
asking for morsels but not swords or cauldrons.
But if you give me this man to work, a protector of stables,
And to sweep them and to carry fresh stalks for the kids,
Then after drinking whey it might make his thigh bigger.
But since he has learned only base deeds,
he does not want to do real work, but instead
he wants to go begging through the community
asking people to feed his unfillable stomach.
But I will tell you this and it will be completed:
If he comes to the home of godly Odysseus,
many a stool from the hands of men will bruise his head and ribs,
as he is struck all over the home."

Note how thoroughly this speech is characterized: its genre (rebuke) is marked with a verb of speaking (νείκεσσεν), but the narrative also qualifies it as "terrible and unseemly" (ἔκπαγλον καὶ ἀεικές) before also anticipating Odysseus's angry reaction (ὄρινε δὲ κῆρ Ὀδυσῆος). Such speech framing emphasizes the exceptionality of the exchange, while also shaping the audience's judgment of the speech's content. Although this scene is part of the plot that demands Odysseus's suffering in his own home as a justification for the subsequent slaughter, its specific tone and content are not similarly predetermined. For example, note the goatherd's emphasis on work and denigration of the beggar for his failure to live up to some unarticulated standard.[46] While Melanthios is often seen as an opportunistic toady for the suitors, the narrator gives no indication that he himself is not a hard worker. In fact, he talks mostly about work. His expectation that Odysseus-the-beggar will suffer violence is, I believe, another outcropping of internalized oppression: his marginalization of a

social outcast seeks to establish a central position for himself. The narrative's prejudicing of his speech as inappropriate undermines it and marks it as too authoritative and forceful for a slave. In addition, Melanthios reveals an internalization of a disabling discourse: he points out the weak appearance of the beggar and emphasizes that the expected treatment for such a person in the higher society of the suitors can only be physical abuse.

There is, of course, a problematic irony to all of this: even though the mistreatment of Odysseus, or of a suppliant, is used as a partial explanation for Melanthios's eventual mutilation, from *his* perspective he is lashing out at someone lower in the social hierarchy.[47] This leaves us room to consider his abusive speech as a matter of characterization of a type of slave and a specific mentality. Melanthios's internalized violence appears again when he dehumanizes Odysseus by calling him a dog and imagines becoming wealthy on his own by selling the beggar into slavery (17.247–53). Melanthios's assertion of agency and independence is transgressive for his social position, clear in his wish for Telemachus's death in the same scene. Here, Melanthios acquires the language and affect of a household ruler: he imagines Odysseus in the lower social position the latter is claiming and dehumanizes him (he is a "dog who knows ruinous things," οἷον ἔειπε κύων ὀλοφώϊα εἰδώς, 17.248), depriving the hated other of the very agency he has never had.

In one of his last speeches (20.177–84), Melanthios is again characterized by his use of insulting language and speech that is perhaps authoritative beyond his position: he asserts that the beggar himself is acting inappropriately and predicts that violence will be necessary between them. As earlier, Melanthios acts in the interest of asserting a hierarchy in which he is not in the dominant position but through which he can exercise some putative power over the unknown beggar. Melanthios is clearly offensive in wishing for the death of Odysseus and in *unknowingly* insulting and threatening the head of household himself.

Given this pattern, I believe that Melanthō's situation is clear before she even speaks. But first it is worth noting that where Melanthios is singular in his punishment, Melanthō serves as a metonym for the behavior and justified punishment of the other eleven unnamed enslaved women. When she first appears (18.321–40), the narrator frames her in a way that contrasts her with Eumaios. She was raised by Penelope, who gave her toys, but despite this kindness, Melanthō ignores her mistress and has sex with the suitor Eurymakhos.[48] (And many commentators suggest that it was Melanthō who betrayed Penelope's weaving trick.)[49]

These observations show that, despite being integrated into the family structure, Melanthō has not internalized her position like Eurykleia or Eumaios and has instead exercised agency in pursuing sexuality. (Or, perhaps more accurately, exercising control over her own body to choose a different master.) The epic returns to this issue more than once: Odysseus watches the serving women go to their lovers while feigning sleep in Book 20 and fends off the desire to kill them immediately (20.5–22). When he reveals himself to the suitors in Book 22, he accuses them of forcefully sleeping with the women.

Melanthō's stolen agency over her body extends to language as well. Like Melanthios, she insults Odysseus and is marked as using offensive speech by the narrator (τὸν δ' αἰσχρῶς ἐνένιπε, 18.321... ἥ ῥ' Ὀδυσῆ› ἐνένιπεν ὀνειδείοισ' ἐπέεσσι, 18.326–36):

ἥ ῥ' Ὀδυσῆ› ἐνένιπεν ὀνειδείοισ' ἐπέεσσι·
ξεῖνε τάλαν, σύ γέ τις φρένας ἐκπεπαταγμένος ἐσσί,
οὐδ' ἐθέλεις εὕδειν χαλκήϊον ἐς δόμον ἐλθὼν
ἠέ που ἐς λέσχην, ἀλλ' ἐνθάδε πόλλ› ἀγορεύεις
θαρσαλέως πολλοῖσι μετ' ἀνδράσιν, οὐδέ τι θυμῷ
ταρβεῖς· ἦ ῥά σε οἶνος ἔχει φρένας, ἤ νύ τοι αἰεὶ
τοιοῦτος νόος ἐστίν, ὃ καὶ μεταμώνια βάζεις.
ἦ ἀλύεις ὅτι Ἶρον ἐνίκησας τὸν ἀλήτην;
μή τίς τοι τάχα Ἴρου ἀμείνων ἄλλος ἀναστῇ,
ὅς τίς σ' ἀμφὶ κάρη κεκοπὼς χερσὶ στιβαρῇσι
δώματος ἐκπέμψῃσι φορύξας αἵματι πολλῷ.

She rebuked Odysseus with abusive words.
"Wretched stranger, you are completely insane—
You are unwilling to go sleep in the smith's house
or into a lodge but instead you say so much
boldly here among many men.
And you are not at all afraid in your heart.
Wine really has gotten hold of your thoughts
or else your mind is always like this which is why you babble meaningless things.
Or are you all excited because you defeated the beggar Iros?
May no other better than Iros quickly arise
who might bash about your head with two strong hands
And drive you out of the house once he drenches you with so much blood."

In her use of abusive speech for a beggar, Melanthō commits the same transgression as Melanthios. In addition, the details of her transgression may be damning. Here, Melanthō may be ironically criticizing the very things for which Odysseus is most well-known, his intelligence and his ability with speech, when she calls him insane and says he babbles meaningless things. And, like Melanthios, she imagines that additional violence is the correct and likely reward for a marginalized figure like the beggar. In each case, the system that devalues the lives of others and dehumanizes them through real or even imaginary mutilation is internalized. In this situation, Odysseus-in-disguise is less restrained: he objects to her language, insults her, and promises violence for her too. (Although he postpones this by threatening to inform Telemachus of her transgressions.) This exchange gives us a view of a unique hierarchical dynamic—what is the importance of Melanthō's gender in conveying the depth of this particular transgression? Note the difference in tone in the way Odysseus reacts to Melanthios and Melanthō. He is more aggressive and condemnatory of the verbally enslaved woman, while he considers murdering Melanthios on the spot (only to delay the action for a day).

If Melanthō's first appearance establishes a contrast with Eumaios and character affinity with Melanthios, her second major appearance relies in part on the characterization of Eurykleia (19.65–95). In Book 19, she insults Odysseus again and predicts more violence. Odysseus responds by playing on tropes of appearance, correctly noting that she insults him because of the way he looks. He claims that he lost everything by divine fate and predicts that Melanthō too will suffer along with the other women who will pay the price for their reckless deeds (*atasthala*, ἀτασθάλλουσ'), thanks to Telemachus's agency. Penelope intervenes at this point and insults her, asserting she has committed some great transgression, and threatening violence. Without a larger interpretive framework, the insulting and silencing of Melanthō seems excessively cruel. Yes, she is abusing her household's ruler, but she is doing it unknowingly. As far as she knows, she is rebuking a homeless beggar. This act remains inappropriate, but of a different degree of severity from the former. If we are to consider her behavior and Melanthios's from the perspective of Zeus's comments inspired by the actions of Aigisthos, we must conclude that the same rules do not apply to all parties. Zeus laments that Aigisthos suffered because he acted excessively, even though he had been warned not to. In the rehabilitation of Odysseus, as I suggest in Chapter 4, the eponymous hero is also shown to have suffered from the excessive behavior of his men and his own hubris during his adventure

with the Kyklops. The suffering of the disfavored enslaved people is equivalent but not identical. Any exercise of agency triggers a violent reprisal. In the epic's cultural logic, slaves do not have the same right to agency and action because they are not fully people. Their attempts to assert personhood are offensive to the social order unless their personhood and agency is in the support of Odysseus's family (as in the limited cases of Eumaios and Eurykleia).

In claiming a double-parallel between Eumaios-Melanthios and Eurykleia-Melanthō, I have neglected Dolios, the father of both bad slaves and a dining companion of Odysseus in Book 24.[50] Benjamin Haller has recently examined the importance of Dolios in the epic as reflecting Penelope's guile and layers of other possible *Odyssey* narratives.[51] Behind the characterization of Dolios is the threat of the true palace economy betraying Odysseus: Penelope, for Dolios was a gift to Penelope upon her marriage to Odysseus. When Odysseus dines with Dolios in Book 24—and here I depart from other interpreters—it represents the victory of the center over the margin in master over slave, as well as male over feminine. And it is a violent reassertion: Odysseus has dehumanized and murdered two of Dolios's children. Dolios, however, seems completely loyal and untroubled by their deaths. He exists only to serve the homecoming hero.

Many of the conclusions I have offered so far are also achievable from feminism, queer theory, critical race theory, or class-based interpretations. But the frame of Disability Studies elucidates a process of dehumanization that is a reflex of the epic's ideologically informed exploration of what it means to be human. At the very least, the twinned processes of the infantilization and vilification of marginalized bodies has provided another way to understand the logic behind the mutilation and murder of some slaves and not others. But there is a broader aspect in this representation, which I voiced earlier, that the performance of these narratives reinforces the worldview that makes us all possible actors in similar stories. If epic discourse is therapeutic in that it potentially regulates the way individuals and groups operate in a culture together, then what we uncover in looking at marginalized characters is a reassertion of a type of determinism. The epic acknowledges the importance of agency through control over narrative, but circumscribes this by marking off those who are deprived of it. Through this process of

correction, epic might be said to advance some of the worst aspects of discourse by conditioning certain classes of people to certain behaviors without evaluative comments on its essential rightness.

But to close on a slightly less negative note, the dialogic nature of epic and the complexity of the relationships and roles that are displayed within it may inspire audiences to object to rather than accept its representations. Epic's strong and repeated justification of mutilation, death, and vengeance invites us through a double ideological move to question it and respond in our receptions. This, at least, is an interpretive move open to modern audiences. For ancient audiences, I imagine that the epic's treatment of marginalized bodies and peoples reflected and reinforced cultural assumptions and hierarchies. In reading the epic this way, however, we gain access to a new way of thinking about its use of folk psychology. It clearly shows the impact of internalized notions of oppression and violence through the slaves whose voices are explored in this chapter. In doing so, it dramatizes and demonstrates the impact that discourse has on shaping the way people act in the world.

While the *Odyssey* reveals an apparent depth of understanding about the ways that stories shape and constrain us, it does not seem to express deep concern about the negative impact of such forces on others apart from Odysseus. This is the theme I will continue to pursue in the next chapter in turning to consider the epic's discourse on women and, in particular, the depiction of Penelope.

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1 An exception: Newton 2015:269: Odysseus uses elements of Eumaios' own tale to create his own, thus crafting sympathy between the two men; cf. Alden 2017:277; see Powell 1977:60–62; Walcot 1977; Rose 1980. Emlyn-Jones 1986:3: "Odysseus's fictional autobiographies vary according to the image he wishes to project."

2 Cf. Palmer 2010:49–55.

3 For Kassandra's marginalization in Homer, see Christensen 2019.

4 See Doherty 1992; Thalmann 1998b. Consider, e.g., Rose 2012:144: "in the *Odyssey* ... the ideology of the dominant male has incorporated a utopian image of near female equality in the Phaeacian queen Arētē and in Penelope functioning in the absence of a male *kyrios*, at the same time as it indulges in misogynistic fantasies of castrating temptresses, female monsters, slatternly slave girls, and deadly traitorous wives, then reincorporates the positive female characters in an androcentric hierarchy, whereby the faithful wife is firmly excluded from any political role and securely shut up in the women's quarters"; cf. Wohl 1993 and Murnaghan 2011. For more on the depiction of women in Homer, see note 2 in Chapter 7.

5 I am indebted to David Perry for sharing with me a bibliography on Disability Studies at an early stage in this work. Frameworks from other post-structural approaches and Critical Race Studies, Queer Studies, and Feminist readings can help reach similar conclusions.

6 Cf. Rose 2012:145–46, where he argues that the *Odyssey* can be read as a "justification of

slavery and its hierarchy," but, understood from the perspective of a Marxist double hermeneutic—Rose's application of the work of Fredric Jameson—it includes subversive elements as well.

7 Cf. Thomson 1997:6–7 especially; cf. Warner 2001:116: "From a post-structuralist perspective ... is the understanding that 'reality' is a socially contested and socially structured term. Reality is understood to be regulated through discourse and the assumed transparency of language is refuted in favour of viewing language as constructive."

8 Thomson 1997:10–12, on this issue from the perspective of Disability Studies.

9 For disability as analogous to race, see Linton 1998:18–21. For disability and feminism, see Thomson 1997:28–36.

10 Thomson 1997:5–6: "related perceptions of corporeal otherness" include mutilation, deformation, crippledness, or physical disability.

11 Linton 1998:98–99

12 Cf. Linton 1998:113: In literature, disabled people are rarely agents; rather, "[D]isabled people are those to be provided for, given to, and helped. Reading the narrative of the curriculum as a whole, disability is something to take action on, not something to reflect on. Yet, although disabled people are victims, not actors in the story, disability itself has agency, intention and power."

13 Mitchell and Snyder 2000:6: "... we argue that literary efforts to illuminate the dark recesses of disability produce a form of discursive subjugation. The effort to narrate disability's myriad deviations is an attempt to bring the body unruliness under control"; cf. Thomson 1997:5–6.

14 For deformity and disability in ancient Greece and Rome, see Garland 1995. For the extent to which modern concepts of disability can be mapped on to antiquity, see Penrose 2015:499–501; Rose 2003:3; and the Introduction to Laes et al, 2013. For the treatment and representation of disabilities in Rome, see Laes, Goody, and Rose 2016. For essays on monstrosity in Greece and Rome, see Atherton 2002 and Clare 2002.

15 2000:8; cf. 23: "Strategic constructionism destigmatizes the disabled body, makes difference relative, denaturalizes so-called normalcy, and challenges appearance hierarchies. Strategic essentialism, by contrast, validates individual experience and consciousness, imagines community, authorizes history, and facilities self-naming." Consider also, Warner 2001:16: Social-constructionist approaches to therapy explore normative values to expose that they are "regulatory fictions" and thus disputable.

16 For the *Odyssey*'s ethnographic view of human beings, see Dougherty 2001, Chap. 4 especially. For alterity and monstrosity in the Kyklops episode, see Clare 2002.

17 Linton 1998:23: "The absolute categories *normal* and *abnormal* depend on each other for their existence and depend on the maintenance of the opposition for their meaning."

18 As Erwin Cook and others have pointed out to me, this significantly constrains what we can say about the characterization of Helen and Penelope. See Chapter 7 for a discussion of the Homeric treatment of non-slave women.

19 On physiognomy as a potentially deadly symptom of a culture's discourse on disability, see Mitchell and Snyder 2000:59. For disability studies applied to Homer, see Brockliss 2019 and Christensen 2021. for Disability in the ancient world in general, see Garland 1995; Stiker 1999; Kelley 2007; Penrose 2015; and Laes 2011.

20 1.302: "I see that you are really big and noble, and brave" μάλα γάρ σ' ὁρόω καλόν τε μέγαν τε, = 3.199 (Nestor addressing Telemachus). Cf. 4.141–47 where Helen recognizes Telemachus because he looks like his father and Menelaos responds "I was just now thinking this too, wife, as you note the similarity: / these are the kinds of feet and hands / the eye glances, and head and hair belonging to that man" (οὕτω νῦν καὶ ἐγὼ νοέω, γύναι, ὡς σὺ ἔΐσκεις· / κείνου γὰρ τοιοίδε πόδες τοιαίδε τε χεῖρες / ὀφθαλμῶν τε βολαὶ κεφαλή τ' ἐφύπερθέ τε χαῖται, 4.148–50). Cf. Achilles to Lykaon, *Il*. 21.108: "Don't you see what kind of man I am, beautiful and big?" οὐχ ὁράᾳς οἷος καὶ ἐγὼ καλός τε μέγας τε;

21 See Garland 1995:87–89. For lameness bestowing upon a figure "the privilege of an uncommon man, of an exceptional qualification," see Vernant 1985:21. In Aesop's fables, feigned lameness is a characteristic of clever, devious animals, see Aes. *Fab*. 198 and 214. For lameness and intelligence in Homeric epic and myth from the perspective of foot wounds, see Christensen 2016.

22 For the contrast between *biē* and *mētis*, see Nagy 1999 [1979], passim and Dunkle 1987. For the operation of the *mētis* motif in the *Odyssey*, see Cook 1995. See Christensen, Forthcoming, for a fuller version of this argument.

23 For Demodokos's song, see the classic article of Burkert (1997); cf. Alden 1997; Bierl 2012; and Alden 2017:211–16 with bibliography. For a survey of the social meanings explored in Odysseus' playing the part of an enslaved person, see Rankine 2011.

24 Thalmann 1998b:26: In its depiction of "female slaves, the *Odyssey* represents a more naturalized and complicated version" of what Thalmann calls earlier "class and gender in a hierarchized, androcentric culture." Not everyone agrees that the term "slave" applies to these women; see the overview in Thalmann 1998b:24. For an exploration of slavery in Homer that resists a structural normative/non-normative construction, see Rankine 2011. Rankine focuses on slavery as a "social death" (36) which obliterates the enslaved person's social connections but leaves the individual alive.

25 For the Homeric epics depicting "good" slaves as speaking with deference towards their masters, see Minchin 2007. This deference extends as well to an erasure of agency and self.

26 See, for example, Roisman 1990:218–21. On Eumaios and Odysseus, see Olson 1995:120–39.

27 At 14.115–120, Eumaios is denied patronymics, instead he defines himself as a servant of a master; see Higbie 1995:179n:6. Rose 2012, 157–58: Some have read the episode with Eumaios as a "homily on the good slave from the master's perspective." On Eumaios' loyalty, see Alden 2017:282; Thalmann 1998a:97–100.

28 "For I sit here mourning and fretting over my godly master [ἀντιθέου γὰρ ἄνακτος ὀδυρόμενος καὶ ἀχεύων] while I raise up fine swine for other people to eat. But that man goes longing [αὐτὰρ κεῖνος ἐελδόμενός που ἐδωδῆς] I think for food as he wanders through the country and people of other men, if he is still alive and sees the light of the sun."

29 "Eat, ill-starred stranger, and take pleasure in these things which are near. God will give one thing and pass by another, whatever he wishes in in his heart. He is capable of everything" (ἔσθιε, δαιμόνιε ξείνων, καὶ τέρπεο τοῖσδε, / οἷα πάρεστι· θεὸς δὲ τὸ μὲν δώσει, τὸ δ' ἐάσει, / ὅττι κεν ᾧ θυμῷ ἐθέλῃ· δύναται γὰρ ἅπαντα; cf. 14.79–109 where he laments the diminished wealth of the estate. Thalmann 1998a:27: the epic marks slaves as good or bad based on "compliance with or betrayal of the masters' interests."

30 Schol. BQ ad Hom. *Od*. 14.147 "'But I call him *elder* ...' I do not call Odysseus 'master' but big brother because of his loving-care for me. For 'to *ētheie*' is the address of a younger

[brother] to an older" (ἀλλά μιν ἠθεῖον καλέω] οὐ καλῶ αὐτὸν Ὀδυσσέα ἢ δεσπότην, ἀλλὰ ἀδελφὸν μείζονα διὰ τὴν πρὸς ἐμὲ φιλοστοργίαν. τὸ δὲ ἠθεῖε προσφώνησίς ἐστι νεωτέρου πρὸς μείζονα).

31 Mitchell and Snyder 2000:3: "The internalized oppression has resulted from institutionally enforced hierarchies of disability." On false consciousness and alienation among the disabled, see Charlton 1998:27–29.

32 Warner (2001:106) draws on Harstock 1983.

33 On Eumaios as undergoing a "trial by Para-Narrative," see Alden 2017:272–83; he has some narrative control because he resists Odysseus's narrative (281).

34 On Eumaios's power of speech, see Beck 2012:39–40.

35 Doherty (1995:151–52) gives an overview of Eumaios's background story; Olson 1995:135–37. See Thalmann (1998a:31–32) for the appropriation of Eumaios in the elite, in order, in part, to explain his good character.

36 Rose 2012:163: "This motif of social downward mobility, so prominent in Odysseus's lies, in the account of Eumaios's life trajectory, and in Eumaios's bitter comment on the consequences of slavery, is in irreconcilable tension with the aristocratic celebration of inherited excellence implying a secure key to the justice of the existing social hierarchy. Moreover, this potentially shattering mobility is a structural element in the plot of the *Odyssey*..."; and 164:" this is in part a central reinforcement of a meritocratic ideology."

37 See Thalmann (1998b:27–28) for an overview of Eurykleia's social and economic role in the household,

38 Thalmann (1998a: 29) explains the moral quality of female slaves as defined by their sexual behavior. He does not comment on Eumaios's apparent celibacy.

39 Cf. Alden 2017.

40 The conversation between Penelope and Eurykleia may prolong the interval before the reunion and increases anticipation: Beck 2005:107–10.

41 On Melanthios's name as "black," see Alden 2017:192.

42 The epic marks such mutilation as especially severe; earlier the same sequence is attributed as the act of a monstrous king named Ekhetos (18.83–87).

43 Atwood 2006:1: "I've chosen to give the telling of the story to Penelope and the twelve hanged maids. The maids form a chanting and singing Chorus which focuses on two questions that must post themselves after any close reading of *The Odyssey*: what led to the hanging of the maids, and what was Penelope really up to? The story as told in *The Odyssey* doesn't hold water: there are too many inconsistencies. I've always been haunted by the hanged maids; and, in *The Penelopiad*, so is Penelope herself."

44 See Adkins (1960:59n. 17) for the force of rebuke in ancient Greek language as including mockery and abuse.

45 See Minchin 2007:167–68.

46 See Rose (2012:160) for the pattern of insult followed by verbal abuse.

47 According to Cook (2016:97–99), Eumaios's treatment of a suppliant models correct behavior according to social rules of reciprocity. By comparison to Eumaios alone then, Melanthios's behavior is inappropriate. Nevertheless, Melanthios's acts in service to the suitors are added to his characterization. I suspect that some audience members may not

have seen Melanthios's treatment of Odysseus as a sufficient cause for his execution. In Patrice Rankine's analysis of the dynamics of slavery in Homeric society, Odysseus has escaped a real possibility of slavery (2011, 34-5).

48 Thalmann 1998b:29: "The slave is not, cannot be, just 'animate property.' She possesses sexuality, though she is not meant to control it." On Melanthō's sexual transgression as functioning as a displacement of suspicion from Penelope, see Katz 1991:132: cf. Thalmann 1998b:30: the twelve maidservants who "exercise control over their sexuality ... are ... seen as treacherous."

49 See Haller 2013:276; cf. Wilamowitz-Moellendorff 1884:50; Winkler 1990:149; Vlahos 2011:38.

50 See Haller (2013:283) for Dolios's own family is the mirror image of Odysseus's.

51 Eisenberger (1973:315–16) notes that the close relationship suggested between Dolios and Penelope at 4.735 explains the care Penelope lavished on Melantho at 18.322–23. Wender (1978:54–56) argues conversely that "Dolius ... is carelessly handled throughout the *Odyssey*" (56).

7

Penelope's Subordinated Agency

κακότητος ἐπειρήθητε καὶ ὑμεῖς,
ἴκελα Τηλεμάχωι καὶ [ἐχέφρονι Πηνελοπείηι.

You too have known evil
Like Telemachus and wise Penelope.

P. Ryl. 3.487

When Penelope and Odysseus encounter each other in the *Odyssey*, their mutual recognition is delayed, both as a function of the epic's structure and as an extension of its themes. When she speaks to Odysseus in disguise, Penelope reflects on her endless weeping (19.512–17):

αὐτὰρ ἐμοὶ καὶ πένθος ἀμέτρητον πόρε δαίμων·
ἤματα μὲν γὰρ τέρπομ' ὀδυρομένη γοόωσα,
ἔς τ' ἐμὰ ἔργ' ὁρόωσα καὶ ἀμφιπόλων ἐνὶ οἴκῳ·
αὐτὰρ ἐπὴν νὺξ ἔλθῃ, ἕλῃσί τε κοῖτος ἅπαντας,
κεῖμαι ἐνὶ λέκτρῳ, πυκιναὶ δέ μοι ἀμφ' ἀδινὸν κῆρ
ὀξεῖαι μελεδῶναι ὀδυρομένην ἐρέθουσιν.

"But a god gave me truly measureless grief.
I take pleasure grieving, mourning out my days
Looking at my work and that of the servants in my home
But when night comes, and bedtime takes everyone,
I lie in my bed and the worries often plague my beating heart,
Sharp concerns vex me while I grieve."

Here, Penelope attributes her suffering to a divine entity and her paralysis in grief recalls her husband's similar inaction in Book 5. There are, nevertheless, some signal differences. Odysseus spends his nights having

sex with Kalypso, while Penelope depicts herself "taking pleasure in grief." When night comes, she is overcome by anxieties, too. Here, the language of Penelope's lost days and troubled nights evokes a life interrupted and a narrative indefinitely forestalled. But, unlike Odysseus or Telemachus, Penelope is not transformed when she gains greater control of her narrative. Although she emerges as a strong speaker in the poem, her speech functions primarily in service of the epic's external solution to her suffering: the return of her husband.

In the final chapter, I will discuss the play of narrative closure in the *Odyssey* and offer some insights from modern studies into unresolved grief to help to characterize the paralyzing sorrow parents and spouses feel when their loss can find no resolution. But in this chapter, I want to focus on the ways in which the Homeric depiction of Penelope may be understood as relying on and re-enforcing psychologically damaging discourse about women. Even though Penelope is easily the most complex woman depicted in Homeric poetry, readings that emphasize her complexity tend to overlook the way her "behavior is imposed on her by her impossible role as faithful wife of a man who is absent" (Murnaghan 2011:101). As I will argue in this chapter, Penelope's characterization is limited to traditional roles (hostess or potential bride) and hemmed in by cultural discourse about the weakness of the female body. In addition, Penelope's suffering is instrumentalized: the emotional cost of Odysseus's absence increases the value of his homecoming and delimits idealized behavior for a woman separated from her husband.

In the previous chapter, I examined the social positions of enslaved people through the lens of Disability Studies and outlined the way that good and bad slaves are distinguished based on assertions of agency. Through a process of vilification and infantilization, the *Odyssey* represents—and projects—a hierarchical discourse that justifies and motivates the marginalization of these individuals. In society at large, members of marginalized groups are conditioned to see themselves in the value terms evoked and dictated by the center. In the *Odyssey*, the positive marginalized groups display internalized oppression and adhere to the passivity of stereotypes of disabled bodies in other cultures and literature; those who fail to do this are mutilated. While this investigation is less clinical on the surface than the examinations of the previous chapters, it nevertheless engages critically with questions of how the *Odyssey* reflects the way individual and cultural narratives shape human minds. In addition, such an investigation remains clinically oriented insofar as it helps us to view better the maladaptations of individual minds

in relation to cultural discourse.

In discussing representations of enslaved people, I focused on ways in which the agency of women is especially constrained by social expectations and the gendered roles they are allowed to play in the world produced by the poem. Because gender and class overlap without being completely coextensive, Disability Studies allows us to treat oppressed groups together. But when considering the place of all women within the world the poem presents to its audiences, it is insufficient to proceed without looking at women as a separate group.[1] We should also distinguish between the treatment of outright enslaved women and those who are free, even if we can conclude that both groups remain subordinate to male interests and desires to differing degrees.[2] In her idealized state, Penelope has metonymic links with other women in the poem (Arētē and Helen), but she also contrasts with famous female models like Klytemnestra and Helen—in the way that Eurykleia does with Melanthō—because her positive agency supports her husband and son.[3]

In the following pages, after exploring how cultural discourse marginalizes the mental health of women from psychological and feminist perspectives, I will consider ways in which the epic invites us to think about Penelope and to examine how her depiction relies on restrictive social roles and negative tropes about female bodies. I will follow this by exploring the way that gendered discourse shapes the way Penelope *speaks of herself* and imagines her place in the world. Even though Penelope achieves culturally acceptable success in playing subservient roles, her ability to plan, to speak about herself, and to use language powerfully is attainable only because it functions in the service of her husband's *kleos*. In closing this chapter, I will offer an interpretation of the famous simile comparing Penelope and Odysseus's reunion in Book 23 to the happiness of a shipwreck survivor at finding land (23.231–40), which foregrounds her absorption into her husband's character upon his homecoming. Taking the *Odyssey*'s presentation of women and Penelope seriously means we need to understand that her potential is fore-closed and forces a reconsideration of the epic ideal of marital *homophrosunē*, "like-mindedness," which turns out to be less a similarity of thought and intention than an occlusion of one person's agency and identity by another's. The whole analysis, I suggest, indicates that even the most accomplished woman in Homer is not a fully actualized human being and that the epic's paradigmatic messages about women in general may replicate and perpetuate harmful gendered discourse.

A. Disabled Bodies and Oppressed Minds

Feminist theory has long wrangled with cultural discourse and the shaping of women in a society structured around and by gendered oppression, provocatively and powerfully characterized by Catherine A. MacKinnon as creating "false consciousness" (1987).[4] While approaches like MacKinnon's have been criticized for devaluing the importance of individual choices by way of overemphasizing cultural narratives, it nevertheless echoes the post-structuralist insistence on identity emerging as a form of social practice (cf. Warner 2001:119). Along with Disability Studies, these frameworks show that a sense of agency mediated through the language of passivity and victimization can lead to delegitimization and dehumanization (Linton 1998:25). Disability studies and feminist criticism converge in uncovering the way women in particular are depicted socially and treated therapeutically; in both cases, women are seen as "weak, envious, immature, and driven by emotions" (Linton 1998:100). The female body, moreover, is already figured as disabled—or even mutilated, to use a Freudian concept—in a system that posits a male body as normal. Indeed, Rosemarie Thomson sees the foundation of femaleness as a disability in Aristotle's work (1997:19–21, on *Generation of Animals* 2.737a and 4.767b).[5]

One narrative thread altered by this perspective is the way that the *Odyssey*'s homecoming narrative emphasizes and utilizes Penelope's trauma. Historically, mental illness has been underdiagnosed in women; their physical and mental suffering has been dismissed as a weakness of their gender (see the overview in Showalter 1985). By the turn of the 21st century, rates of depression for women were regularly higher than for men, due in large part to a sense of marginalization and the greater presence of violence in their lives (actual and threatened emotional, sexual, and physical abuse) and multiplied by problems of (mis)diagnosis and treatment (Schreiber 2001:85–86). From a feminist perspective, moreover, women who suffer from depression often do so because of a limited sense of agency or self, linked to gendered oppression (Steen 1991). As many researchers have noted from working with women in North America, their sense of self is dominated by an internal dialogue that prizes social and cultural discourses about women over a sense of personal agency and meaning (e.g., Schreiber 1985:88).[6] As marginalized objects of cultural discourse, women in therapy often describe a deep sense of inadequacy and lack of control.[7] To an extent, we could say that women's subjective sense of agency is mutilated by discourse; and when

they do not adhere to cultural expectations they are subject to violent reprisals. Therapy to address such suffering must take the cultural environment into consideration, to somehow try to reduce the effects of oppression (Steen 1991). Indeed, Narrative Therapy, as described earlier, has been proposed as providing crucial advantages to women who have suffered traumatic sexual violence because it helps them to address the "oppressive power structures" that have shaped their lives and it encourages the recuperation of agency through the revising of life narratives (Draucker 1998).[8] Penelope's experiences, however, are not recontextualized; rather, the function of depicting her suffering is, generally, to reinforce the importance of a dominant patriarchy with a man like Odysseus in control.

Women in Homer speak differently than men. As Elizabeth Minchin has demonstrated, they tend to focus on difficulties they may not be able to surmount and they customarily create a narrative distance between the actions in their own stories and their personal agency.[9] The degree of agency attributed to women in narrative and through narrative is related as well to deep-seated cultural beliefs about women—as Helene Foley (1995:3) makes clear when summarizing Aristotle (*Eudemian Ethics* 7.1237a): "Men are good absolutely, women are good for their function; women's virtues fit them to be ruled; men's to rule."

Penelope and her representation in Homer has been a topic of many in-depth investigations.[10] When looking at the depiction of Penelope, modern readers have recognized the importance of discourse in shaping her characterization in the epic. In particular, Helene Foley emphasizes how she is constrained by overlapping layers of responsibility: "Penelope operates more fully than any male character in the poem within a web of relationships and responsibilities from which she neither can nor wishes to withdraw... Sex roles, then, are critical to defining gender differences in moral agency in this poem. Penelope makes a choice to sacrifice her own desires in establishing the contest with the bow, and she is placed in a paralyzing position in which she can take no action that is without negative consequences" (1994:107). Given such paralysis, it should come as no surprise that Penelope expresses the desire to die rather than go on (18.201–5):[11]

> "ἦ με μάλ' αἰνοπαθῆ μαλακὸν περὶ κῶμ' ἐκάλυψεν.
> αἴθε μοι ὣς μαλακὸν θάνατον πόροι Ἄρτεμις ἁγνὴ
> αὐτίκα νῦν, ἵνα μηκέτ' ὀδυρομένη κατὰ θυμὸν
> αἰῶνα φθινύθω, πόσιος ποθέουσα φίλοιο

παντοίην ἀρετήν, ἐπεὶ ἔξοχος ἦεν Ἀχαιῶν."

"Oh, a soft sleep covered over me in my wretched suffering.
I wish that sacred Artemis would give me a gentle death like this
Right now, so that I might no longer waste my life
Lamenting in my heart, longing for my dear husband,
His virtues of every kind, since he was preeminent among the Achaeans."

At several key moments in the narrative, Penelope pursues action and appears to assert her own agency, only to be sequestered in the women's chambers or put to sleep by Athena. This repeated infantilization allows her to appear ready to act, to be a ready mate for her husband, yet it ultimately forecloses most hopes for independent action. Note in the passage above how constrained Penelope's existence is. She has faced the culturally correct options of choosing a new husband or returning to the house of her father, but the only narratively appropriate option is for her to continue in a frozen moment of delay, constantly experiencing the loss of her husband and faced by the threat that someone else will force her to a decision she cannot and does not want to make.[12] As with characters discussed elsewhere in this book, Penelope faces a crisis of the flight or fight instinct; her additional burden is that she is not permitted to make any move out of this paralysis. The constant conflict of this fight or flight instinct creates a terminal sense of helplessness, producing depression, unresolved trauma, and a fragmentary sense of self. Within the male dominated world, Penelope's own interest and agency can be only tertiary to the aims of her husband and son.[13]

B. "Reading" Penelope

The comments I have made so far prepare us in part to imagine Penelope's depiction in Homer as the idealized result of a woman who "successfully" responds to the effects of harmful discourse. To get a sense of the way the audience is prepared to view her, it is useful to consider how the poem establishes her reputation. In the epic, she is primarily praised as someone who *resists* action. In pursuing the union of Penelope and Odysseus, the epic is keenly interested in the theme of *homophrosunē*, the like-mindedness of husband and wife—in this, they work together "to bring joy to their friends and pain to their enemies" (ἦ ὅθ' ὁμοφρονέοντε

νοήμασιν οἶκον ἔχητον / ἀνὴρ ἠδὲ γυνή· πόλλ' ἄλγεα δυσμενέεσσι, / χάρματα δ' εὐμενέτῃσι, 6.183–85). But the achievement of this goal also entails the occlusion of one member of the couple in favor of the glory of the other.[14] As Cristina Franco points out, while Odysseus is marked repeatedly by his complicated nature and endowed with considerable agency, "Penelope is characterized by her self-restraint, caution, and firmness and makes use of her agency to leave everything unchanged rather than make things move" (2012:62).[15] The enigma of her behavior is also part of her idealized character: Penelope's obscure intentions may leave her open to multiple interpretive moves (see Schein 1994:24), but even this coyness is a reflex of a cultural discourse where women are mysterious and distant.[16] Penelope's persistence is also a kind of non-action, connected in part to her secondary status as a woman.[17] The expectation that so intelligent and capable a figure will wait in a permanent state of suffering is a type of psychological mutilation. But Penelope's apparent desire and agency function to make her a better fit for Odysseus and increase the glory of his homecoming.[18]

Penelope's limited importance as a person may be signaled by her husband's words before they meet. When he asks his mother about Penelope in Book 11, he asks if "she remains near [my] child and guards everything steadfast, or has she already married another who is best of the Achaeans" (11.178–79), then says nothing to his mother's description of her as consuming her days with weeping (181–83). But when Odysseus meets Penelope in disguise, he says that "her fame has reached the wide heaven" (ἦ γάρ σευ κλέος οὐρανὸν εὐρὺν ἱκάνει, 19.108)—an assertion usually associated with Odysseus himself (and Agamemnon)[19]—and he also compares her to a king who has ruled his people prosperously (19.106–14). The contrast between this assertion and the reality may mark this scene as blandishment. But, as Olga Levaniouk argues, Odysseus's compliment is "essentially self-referential" (2011:28). Penelope's "glory" is a reflection of his own.

Beneath the surface of the *Odyssey*'s plot is the threat that Penelope's repute will disfigure her, either literally through violent reprisal or figuratively through negative fame. The decentering of Penelope as an agent may, in part, be a response to other traditions that call her fidelity into greater doubt.[20] Pausanias, for example, reports that there was a tradition that Odysseus kicked Penelope out of his home when he returned and that she returned to Sparta (8.12.5). Penelope's infidelity is assumed by the Hellenistic poet Lykophron whose prophet Kassandra claims "that vixen will hollow out his home with shameless whoring"

(*Alexandra* 731–32).[21] Indeed, Apollodorus records in his library of Greek myth that Penelope was "corrupted by Antinoos" or seduced by Amphinomos (*Ep*. 7.38–39). Within the epic, characters and narrators try to read her mind on this: Telemachus thinks that Eurymakhos is the best man to marry Penelope (15.518–24), while the narrator explains that Amphinomos was "especially pleasing to Penelope / because he employed good thoughts" (16.397–98). Even this expression of possible affection, however, may be connected to Penelope's deferred sense of self, for it is Amphinomos who publicly speaks against the murder of Telemachus (16.400–5).

The epic's final book provides room for neither speech nor action from Penelope. It does, however, anticipate how an audience might regard her. When the ghosts of the suitors reach the underworld, they speak with Agamemnon who has an opportunity to expound upon the virtues and vices of women (24.192–202):

"ὄλβιε Λαέρταο πάϊ, πολυμήχαν' Ὀδυσσεῦ,
ἦ ἄρα σὺν μεγάλῃ ἀρετῇ ἐκτήσω ἄκοιτιν·
ὡς ἀγαθαὶ φρένες ἦσαν ἀμύμονι Πηνελοπείῃ,
κούρῃ Ἰκαρίου, ὡς εὖ μέμνητ' Ὀδυσῆος,
ἀνδρὸς κουριδίου. τῶ οἱ κλέος οὔ ποτ' ὀλεῖται
ἥς ἀρετῆς, τεύξουσι δ' ἐπιχθονίοισιν ἀοιδὴν
ἀθάνατοι χαρίεσσαν ἐχέφρονι Πηνελοπείῃ,
οὐχ ὡς Τυνδαρέου κούρη κακὰ μήσατο ἔργα,
κουρίδιον κτείνασα πόσιν, στυγερὴ δέ τ' ἀοιδὴ
ἔσσετ' ἐπ' ἀνθρώπους, χαλεπὴν δέ τε φῆμιν ὀπάσσει
θηλυτέρῃσι γυναιξί, καὶ ἥ κ' εὐεργὸς ἔῃσιν."

"Blessed child of Laertes, much-devising Odysseus,
You really secured a wife of great virtue!
That's how noble blameless Penelope's thoughts are
Ikarios' daughter, how well she remembered Odysseus,
Her wedded husband. And therefore, fame of her virtue will never perish,
And the gods will craft a pleasing song
for mindful Penelope for mortals on the earth.
This is not how it went with Tyndareos' daughter.
She devised wicked deeds and, since she killed
Her wedded husband, a hateful song
Will be hers among men. She will attract an evil reputation

To the race of women, even for one who is good."

While the negative tone of this passage can, in part, be staked to Agamemnon's perspective as a character, the comments' position near the beginning of this book and the end of this epic grant them a summative prominence.[22] The passage starts by communicating Penelope's value in terms of her husband: Odysseus is blessed because his wife has great virtue; he possesses her (ἐκτήσω) as a thing or an attribute.[23] Her virtue translates into fame, but it is secondary fame contingent upon her service to her husband. And, the quality of this fame is constrained by her gender: because of Klytemnestra's act in betraying her husband, all women are subject to negative fame, even when they do well.[24] There is additional ambiguity in this passage when Agamemnon refers to his wife as "Tyndareos's daughter," as some audience members might think of Helen first.[25] In the world of epic, a wife can be a distraction from the accomplishment of a hero's true goal or an adversary when she betrays him.[26] As with the polarity discussed in the prior chapter's discussion of Disability Studies, women are non-agent objects or villains. In this case, however, a wife comes off slightly worse: even when ideal, she is still a potential obstacle to the hero's aims.

C. Depicting Penelope: Uncertainty and Frailty of Flesh

By bringing both the disloyalty and frailty of other famous women into play, the epic reflects general cultural attitudes about women that inform both the characters within the epic and the audience beyond it. Agamemnon's comments can certainly be read proleptically to help us understand how Penelope might have been received by ancient audiences, but they can also be read analeptically to help us better appreciate how she is depicted as a human being within the epic. What emerges from a close reading is the degree to which Penelope's strength of conviction is undercut by a characterization of her feminine weaknesses—an understated uncertainty, a gendered sense of wonder, and a dominance of emotion. In this, Penelope's depiction both adheres to some of the general conditions, which limit women and produce depression according to modern research, while also pathologizing her as a woman in Homeric discourse.

One of Penelope's final speeches in the epic is useful in underscoring the relationship between Penelope as an agent and her gendered body. After the slaughter in Book 22, Penelope delays her reunion with Odysseus by testing him. She acknowledges that he probably is her husband, but deploys a trick to make one last confirmation: she tells him she is going to have the bed moved from their room (extremely difficult since the marriage chamber was built around the bed).[27] Odysseus responds with anger (23.181–204) and Penelope breaks down (23.205–30):

ὣς φάτο, τῆς δ' αὐτοῦ λύτο γούνατα καὶ φίλον ἦτορ,
σήματ' ἀναγνούσῃ, τά οἱ ἔμπεδα πέφραδ' Ὀδυσσεύς·
δακρύσασα δ' ἔπειτ' ἰθὺς κίεν, ἀμφὶ δὲ χεῖρας
δειρῇ βάλλ' Ὀδυσῆϊ, κάρη δ' ἔκυσ' ἠδὲ προσηύδα·
μή μοι, Ὀδυσσεῦ, σκύζευ, ἐπεὶ τά περ ἄλλα μάλιστα
ἀνθρώπων πέπνυσο· θεοὶ δ' ὤπαζον ὀϊζύν,
οἳ νῶϊν ἀγάσαντο παρ' ἀλλήλοισι μένοντε
ἥβης ταρπῆναι καὶ γήραος οὐδὸν ἱκέσθαι.
αὐτὰρ μὴ νῦν μοι τόδε χώεο μηδὲ νεμέσσα,
οὕνεκά σ' οὐ τὸ πρῶτον, ἐπεὶ ἴδον, ὧδ' ἀγάπησα.
αἰεὶ γάρ μοι θυμὸς ἐνὶ στήθεσσι φίλοισιν
ἐρρίγει, μή τίς με βροτῶν ἀπάφοιτ' ἐπέεσσιν
ἐλθών· πολλοὶ γὰρ κακὰ κέρδεα βουλεύουσιν.
οὐδέ κεν Ἀργείη Ἑλένη, Διὸς ἐκγεγαυῖα,
ἀνδρὶ παρ' ἀλλοδαπῷ ἐμίγη φιλότητι καὶ εὐνῇ,
εἰ ᾔδη, ὅ μιν αὖτις ἀρήϊοι υἷες Ἀχαιῶν
ἀξέμεναι οἰκόνδε φίλην ἐς πατρίδ' ἔμελλον.
τὴν δ' ἦ τοι ῥέξαι θεὸς ὤρορεν ἔργον ἀεικές·
τὴν δ' ἄτην οὐ πρόσθεν ἐῷ ἐγκάθετο θυμῷ
λυγρήν, ἐξ ἧς πρῶτα καὶ ἡμέας ἵκετο πένθος.
νῦν δ', ἐπεὶ ἤδη σήματ' ἀριφραδέα κατέλεξας
εὐνῆς ἡμετέρης, τὴν οὐ βροτὸς ἄλλος ὀπώπει,
ἀλλ' οἶοι σύ τ' ἐγώ τε καὶ ἀμφίπολος μία μούνη,
Ἀκτορίς, ἥν μοι δῶκε πατὴρ ἔτι δεῦρο κιούσῃ,
ἣ νῶϊν εἴρυτο θύρας πυκινοῦ θαλάμοιο,
πείθεις δή μευ θυμόν, ἀπηνέα περ μάλ' ἐόντα.

So he spoke, and her knees and dear heart were undone
As she recognized the secure signs which Odysseus pointed out.
As she burst into tears she went straight to him and threw her arms

Around Odysseus's neck. She kissed his head and spoke:
"Don't be angry at me Odysseus, since in all other things
You were wise among men. The gods granted this grief,
Who envied that we would remain with one another
To enjoy our youth and come together to old age.
So, do not be angry with me or criticize me for this now,
Because I did not greet you with love when I first saw you.
For the heart in my dear breast always shuddered,
Afraid that someone would arrive and deceive me with words.
For there are many men who devise evil mischief.
Not even Argive Helen the offspring of Zeus
Would have joined in sex and bed with a foreign man
If she had understood that the warlike Achaeans
Would one day bring her home to her country.
Truly, then, a god drove her to complete the shameful act—
And she did not take to heart this ruinous blindness,
From which the first suffering came to us as well.
But now, since you have laid out the clear signs already
Of our bed, which no other mortal has spied,
Except for you and I and one single attendant,
Aktoris, whom my father gave to me when I was on my way here,
who has guarded the doors of our well-built bedroom,
You persuade my heart, even though it is very resistant."

Throughout the epic, Penelope's physical reactions to speech and action dominate in a way that they do not for other figures. As additional examples will confirm, she is marked out as weeping (appropriately) and for expressing a paralyzing surprise or wonder. Here, Penelope's fear demonstrates an anxiety that no matter what she does she might be subject to violence. Her comments in this speech show her acting in anticipation of her husband's anger and taking considerable pains to justify her actions. Her sense of agency in the world is as limited as that of Eumaios or Eurykleia. She frames her own and Odysseus' suffering as controlled by divine jealousy and, despite a narrative that has taken pains to establish her constancy, unveils an internal world where she was driven by a different kind of fear, that she would be deceived. So, despite her brave face of constancy, the internal world she narrates is one of anxiety. There is, of course, another reading of this scene—namely, that Penelope is presenting a distressed self who would appeal to Odysseus's sense of male mastery and desire to protect. While such a possibility is rather hard

to eliminate, we can conclude that in both cases her depiction relies on an anticipation of male desire for specific norms of female behavior on the part of the narrative.

Penelope also mounts a defense of Helen: she did not know what kind of evil would issue from her actions. Between the mention of her own heart's anxiety and Helen's action, Penelope's unspoken fear is that she cannot trust her own ability to resist persuasive language and the ruin that might follow should she join another man's bed.[28] The "signs" that allow her to circumvent this danger are those that exist from before her husband's departure and which, in this case, were created by the man himself. Note, as well, the simultaneous echoing of the narrative's description of her and the internalized alteration of its meaning. Where the narrator describes her elsewhere as knowing "constant thoughts" (κεδνὰ ἰδυῖαν, 23.182), she describes herself as having a "harsh heart" (ἀπηνέα περ μάλ' ἐόντα, 23.230).[29] The adjective *apēn-* is by no means positive in Homeric language: in the *Iliad*, it describes stubborn minds and harsh judgments in a pejorative sense (e.g., ὡς ἐμὸς οὔ ποτε θυμὸς ὑπερφίαλος καὶ ἀπηνής, 23.611) and in the *Odyssey* it is also connected with *hubris* (ἀλλὰ μάλ' ὑβρίζεις καί τοι νόος ἐστὶν ἀπηνής, 18.381). Here, Penelope speaks of her own positive strength in dismissive, self-effacing terms, displaying a low view of self, which anticipates masculine disdain, in much the same way as Helen has been described by several scholars.[30]

Surveying Penelope's words and depiction throughout the epic demonstrates that while she is, in fact, held up as a model, her exemplarity is in service of a discursive secondariness—her good fame supports or contributes to her husband's. Penelope's depiction often seems contradictory: she is endowed with a crafty intelligence and may be said to determine the legitimacy of her husband's return; and, yet, in addition to signaling a diminished sense of self through her language, whereby she communicates a lack of control over her world and her place in it, the *Odyssey*'s Penelope is marked by the narrative and others for her emotions. She is repeatedly and nearly constantly characterized as weeping or mourning. This adheres in part to the social roles outlined for women in epic and the world of the audiences; it is their duty to lament the dead.[31] But even within this context, feminized versions of grief may have still been seen pejoratively as excessive and uncontrolled. As a scholiast remarks in discussing grief in the *Iliad*, "it is the custom of women to act foolishly in their griefs, and especially to stir up suffering over their children" (ἀδολεσχίαν γὰρ ποιοῦσι τοσούτῳ προσώπῳ

περικείμενοι. ἀλλὰ σύνηθες γυναιξὶ φλυαρεῖν ἐν τοῖς πένθεσι καὶ μάλιστα ἐπὶ τοῖς παισὶ πάθος κινεῖν, Schol. bT ad *Il.* 22.478 b). So, even if Penelope's performance of grief and longing for her husband is in accordance with socially acceptable norms, it still marginalizes her from epic standards of excellence and action granted to others. Her speech introductions often specify that she weeps or mourns before or while she speaks.[32] Indeed, her sorrow is so strong at times that it overwhelms her ability to speak and control her body altogether (4.703–6):

ὣς φάτο, τῆς δ' αὐτοῦ λύτο γούνατα καὶ φίλον ἦτορ·
δὴν δέ μιν ἀφασίη ἐπέων λάβε, τὼ δέ οἱ ὄσσε
δακρυόφιν πλῆσθεν, θαλερὴ δέ οἱ ἔσχετο φωνή.
ὀψὲ δὲ δή μιν ἔπεσσιν ἀμειβομένη προσέειπε·

So he spoke, and her knees and dear heart were loosened.
Speechlessness of words took her for a while and her eyes
Filled with tears and her rich voice was held in check inside her.
After a while, she answered him with words ...

Penelope has the same physical response to Odysseus's confirmation of his identity in Book 23 (205). Penelope is also described as being sidelined from action by "wonder" (*thamb-*) in scenes at the beginning and end of the epic.[33] After Telemachus asserts his authority in the household during their conversation about the songs of Phemios in Book 1, Penelope "returns back into the women's quarters again, struck by wonder" (ἡ μὲν θαμβήσασα πάλιν οἶκόνδε βεβήκει, 1.360);[34] and again in Book 21.354–58:

ἡ μὲν θαμβήσασα πάλιν οἶκόνδε βεβήκει·
παιδὸς γὰρ μῦθον πεπνυμένον ἔνθετο θυμῷ.
ἐς δ' ὑπερῷ' ἀναβᾶσα σὺν ἀμφιπόλοισι γυναιξὶ
κλαῖεν ἔπειτ' Ὀδυσῆα, φίλον πόσιν, ὄφρα οἱ ὕπνον
ἡδὺν ἐπὶ βλεφάροισι βάλε γλαυκῶπις Ἀθήνη.

She returned back into her rooms again, struck by wonder,
For she took the wise speech of her son to heart.
She went up into the upper chamber with her attending women
And wept then over Odysseus, her husband, until
Grey-eyed Athena poured sweet sleep over her eyelids.

The "wonder" here constrains Penelope's response to her characteristic

weeping.[35] Elsewhere in the *Odyssey*, this lexical item marks responses to divine action or signs or to the appearance of Odysseus.[36] In the *Iliad*, a reaction of fear/wonder like this is reserved for surprise at a divine epiphany, fear in battle, or suspense in *watching* action or encountering surprise (e.g. Achilles and Priam meeting).[37] Penelope's agency and self-control is sidelined by her responses to her son or Athena's interventions when she is not paralyzed by weeping.[38] In this, the epic shows a figure with great potential marginalized by social roles and disqualified by the uncontrollable reactions of her body. Penelope's intelligence is simply limited by her role as a woman and her possession of a female body.

Yet, even as the epic marks the negative aspects of Penelope's female body, it also communicates that it is her body that allows her to function in some heroic roles. To start, in one of her first mentions in the epic, she is marked out as one who gave birth to Telemachus (1.223). She is a granted a type of agency because of her body's ability to give birth and attract a husband, but this function is connected again to Odysseus. She conceives of this power, moreover, as something she no longer possesses or that she cannot control. When she appears before the suitors in Book 18, she is inspired by Athena (18.158–59) and claims that "the gods who hold Olympos destroyed my beauty when that man went aboard the hollow ships" (18.181–82).[39] Once Athena beautifies her while she sleeps (187–96), Penelope seems to shift her identity to that of a bride and shames the suitors for suiting improperly (275–80). One could see this as an empowered manipulation of her social role: she plays the bride to be because she can. But it is not clear how much she embraces this role when Athena trots Penelope out to entice the suitors (and Odysseus too) and she insists that "the gods destroyed my virtue and shape and form" when Odysseus left (18.251–52), since she would have had great *kleos* if her husband had come home.[40] Even as she falsely asserts that her body has been compromised by time, Penelope demonstrates that she understands what powers remain to her in the manipulation of the suitors.

Despite the fact that the epic asserts that Penelope has her own *kleos* for her ability to think, she nevertheless is depicted as experiencing a nearly paralyzing onset of emotions. Penelope is therefore defined by the limitations and qualities granted by the cultural discourse surrounding her female body. Its virtue allows her to play the part of an object in someone else's story, as the bride to be pursued by suitors or the wife of a victorious homecoming. In several important ways, Penelope adheres to what we might even expect in our own time from a woman subject to gendered discourse, as discussed above. Her limited sense of her own

worth extends from the expectations of her social roles.[41] Both features of her characterization are worth revisiting before closing this investigation.

D. Agency in Fame and Social Roles

It is possible to read Penelope as a figure whose character and agency are shaped by fear of external violence, doubt about control over her own body, and the limitations imposed by limited, gendered social roles. Stories—and, more broadly, discourse—help to generate these domains. In exploring the interrelation between Penelope's self-worth and her social roles, I want to survey how some of the stories around Penelope continues to shape and limit her. As anticipated earlier, Penelope shows agency only in socially acceptable roles as host and bride, and her expressions of self-worth are focused on the well-being of her husband and son. Of course, if we are to entertain the controversial opinion that Penelope is a more active participant in Odysseus's return, that she recognizes him earlier and uses her role as host and her intelligence both to test him and to facilitate his return, we have a more complicated character.[42] Yet, even in this case, Penelope could still be characterized as using her considerable skills only in deference to and service for her male relatives.

Penelope demonstrates agency as a host and a potential bride in the epic's second half. But the significance of this is limited: she is a host because of her lingering responsibility as Odysseus's spouse, while she is a bride whose public actions are almost entirely inspired by Athena (Murnaghan 1995:71).[43] Playing both roles may contribute to the state of paralysis I emphasize at the beginning of this chapter: Penelope appears powerless to resolve the demands or consequences of either role by claiming one fully instead of another. The narrative imposes greater challenges on this uneasy balance. Penelope is not a fully informed host: she is not informed that Odysseus has returned because she is a potential bride, who must be tested.[44]

Penelope does have the power to command, but she exercises it only in hierarchically appropriate ways.[45] One major scene where Penelope asserts herself in the household is telling. When Odysseus (in disguise) and Telemachus have returned home, Penelope notices from her quarters (16.409) and exits to rebuke the suitor Antinoos (16.418–33). Her rebuke is phrased in language that resonates with the epic's themes ("Antinoos, full of outrage, deviser of evils—they even claim that you / Are the best among those your age among the people of Ithaca / In council and

speeches—but as it turns out you are truly not such a man," 418–20). But this invective relies especially on her position as Odysseus's wife. he emphasizes that Antinoos's own father was saved as a suppliant to Odysseus and complains that he "eats up *his* home, woos his wife, and is trying to kill his child" (τοῦ νῦν οἶκον ἄτιμον ἔδεις, μνάᾳ δὲ γυναῖκα / παῖδά τ' ἀποκτείνεις, 431–32), before adding that he causes her pain greatly (ἐμὲ δὲ μεγάλως ἀκαχίζεις, 432). When she says, "I order you to stop this and to order the rest" (ἀλλά σε παύεσθαι κέλομαι καὶ ἀνωγέμεν ἄλλους, 433), Penelope is not claiming authority to command all the suitors; instead, she is relying upon the dependent relationship of Antinoos' father on her husband to shame her addressee. As a confirmation of this, when Eurymakhos responds to her and tells her not to be upset or worry about Telemachus (435–48), she retreats to her chamber and weeps for Odysseus again.[46]

The most important challenges to a reading of Penelope as an idealized fulfillment of social roles come from her dynamic engagements with Odysseus when he is in disguise. As others have noted well (e.g., Zeitlin 1995; Murnaghan 2011), Penelope's interest in the disguised Odysseus is paradoxical: to fail to assist her husband would be betrayal, but to show too much interest in a stranger would hint at betrayal. As a result, in order to be a proper wife, Penelope must constantly assert that her interest is in her husband's return. For example, after the suppliant beggar has been harmed, she asks Eumaios if he "has perhaps learned anything of enduring-minded Odysseus / or has seen him with his eyes—for he looks to be much-traveled" (εἴ που Ὀδυσσῆος ταλασίφρονος ἠὲ πέπυσται / ἢ ἴδεν ὀφθαλμοῖσι· πολυπλάγκτῳ γὰρ ἔοικε, 17.510–11). She asks for Eumaios to have the beggar come speak to her (17.529); she complains about what the suitors have been doing, but then ends with a lament that "there is no man here / such as Odysseus was, to ward ruin from this home. / If Odysseus should come and reach his paternal land / quickly he and his child together would pay back the outrages of these men" (17.537–40).[47] She evocatively—and perhaps provocatively—compares herself to one who accidentally killed her child and describes her own heart as doubting whether she should stay in the house or marry another. Then she tests Odysseus by asking him to interpret her dream of an eagle killing twenty geese who had brought her joy. In this exchange, Penelope presents two poses of ambivalence—in both she appears to show favor to the suitors over Odysseus in disguise. His interpretation corrects her by assigning the role of eagle to her husband.[48] It is after this exchange that Penelope declares the contest of the bow for the next day.

The stranger promises Odysseus will be there to win. She demurs and then closes the interview.[49]

While Penelope's story is never fully her own, this does not mean that she is not a masterful storyteller. Indeed, for her to be an ideal wife she must appear to navigate her social roles deftly. But the way she describes actions is clearly influenced by her sense of place in the world. When Penelope finally meets with Odysseus-the-beggar, she wastes little time in questioning him (19.104–5) and allowing Odysseus to tell his story (107–22) before she responds by reframing her situation with the suitors (124–36). Then she emphasizes that she has been wearing herself away in mourning for her husband (136) and she retells the story of the shroud, attributing inspiration to a divine agent (19.138). When she speaks of herself, she consistently externalizes agency and emphasizes the forces that hem her in. She concludes by saying "now I am not able to avoid marriage / nor can I discover any other trick. My parents are urging me to marry / and my child is upset as they eat up his wealth / and he notes it" (157–60). She weeps again in response to the beggar's own story of suffering and again to his correct answer about the clothing 'Odysseus' was wearing when he saw him (218–19). Here, Penelope's internal thoughts become opaque; she declares that she will not see her husband returning home (259–60; and 313–16). After ordering that the beggar be given hospitality, Penelope slips into gnomic utterances (325–34):

πῶς γὰρ ἐμεῦ σύ, ξεῖνε, δαήσεαι, εἴ τι γυναικῶν
ἀλλάων περίειμι νόον καὶ ἐπίφρονα μῆτιν,
εἴ κεν ἀϋσταλέος, κακὰ εἱμένος ἐν μεγάροισι
δαινύῃ; ἄνθρωποι δὲ μινυνθάδιοι τελέθουσιν.
ὃς μὲν ἀπηνὴς αὐτὸς ἔῃ καὶ ἀπηνέα εἰδῇ,
τῷ δὲ καταρῶνται πάντες βροτοὶ ἄλγε' ὀπίσσω
ζωῷ, ἀτὰρ τεθνεῶτί γ' ἐφεψιόωνται ἅπαντες·
ὃς δ' ἂν ἀμύμων αὐτὸς ἔῃ καὶ ἀμύμονα εἰδῇ,
τοῦ μέν τε κλέος εὐρὺ διὰ ξεῖνοι φορέουσι
πάντας ἐπ' ἀνθρώπους, πολλοί τέ μιν ἐσθλὸν ἔειπον.

"Stranger, how could you learn about me, whether I surpass
other women in my thought and clever wit,
if you dine shabbily, dressed terribly in the halls?
For human beings have short lives.
One who is harsh and thinks harsh thoughts
All mortals will wish for him to have pains later

While alive and when he is dead everyone mocks him.
But whoever is blameless and thinks blameless thoughts.
Guests carry his *kleos* wide and far to all people.
And many say that he is a good man."

In this passage, Penelope evasively wonders how the beggar might know she is better than other women, without having the opportunity to observe her in action. In this, she specifies that her excellence must be understood within the framework of the virtue afforded to women of a certain class. In this emphasis on social discourse, Penelope indirectly communicates that her own worth as a person resides in the rumor of the guests in her halls and the clothes on this beggar. Here, she emphasizes the need for people to do well to others to earn good *kleos* and translates this into acts of hospitality.[50] Penelope hesitates, however, to locate this rather common fame in women, but refers to a generic *him*, which may indicate an echoing of conventional words or, more provocatively, an attempt to understand her own position in terms of male agency. Beyond this, however, is the explanation that she still sees herself as the agent of a good reputation for her husband's household and that the generic *autos* in this passage refers to the masculine figure she is without.

In the world of Homer, fame, *kleos*, is paramount. The extent to which a person may receive or even stand to receive *kleos* (and what kind it may be) is connected in part to his place in the world. Not all *kleos* is created equally: in the *Iliad* the shame of bad *kleos* is often used to motivate. For women, *kleos* is connected specifically to their social roles and translates to "bad fame" when women behave outside narrow constraints. Against this, Penelope shows some interest in trying to control the narrative: in her first appearance in the epic, she comes veiled before the suitors with two handmaidens (1.328–36) and addresses Phemios and asks him not to sing the terrible song of the homecoming of the Achaeans because it causes her *penthos alaston* (1.337–44). She acknowledges the powers of a singer to entertain (1.337–38), but uses half of her speech to express the emotional impact of song upon her.[51] Famously, Telemachus dismisses this, telling her not to blame the singer, but to blame Zeus (perhaps ironically) and to understand that many other men died too, apart from Odysseus. Where Penelope tries to focus on the force of her individual pain, Telemachus prevaricates and asserts for himself the "power over song in the house the household" (... τοῦ γὰρ κράτος ἔστ' ἐνὶ οἴκῳ, 1.359). Telemachus asserts his own agency and authority by imposing a gendered hierarchy on his mother.[52] Her place is *back* in her own quarters, weaving.

As I have emphasized in earlier chapters, to be truly an agent in Homer means to have control over narrative. To be in control of one's self means having control of your own story and learning how to influence those of others. From the beginning of the epic, Penelope appears to try to wrest control of narratives only to have other narratives—both stories and roles—imposed upon her. There is, of course, a curious perceptual gap between Penelope's actions in the epic and the agency ascribed to her by other characters. When others speak of her famous weaving trick, it is with suspicion and perhaps admiration (as in Book 2).[53] In the repeated narration of this deed, the suitors see her mental prowess as a threat: she is catalogued with a group of clever women (Turō, Alkmēnē, and Mukēnē, 2.120), but her intelligence is not "fateful" or "righteous" (ἐναίσιμον, 2.122).[54] Indeed, the suitors seem to see her as arrogating to herself the male prerogative of *kleos*: Antinoos claims that "she has acquired great *kleos* for herself / but for you she has caused a lack of plenty" (... μέγα μὲν κλέος αὐτῇ / ποιεῖτ', αὐτὰρ σοί γε ποθὴν πολέος βιότοιο, 2.125–26).[55] This, to an extent, confirms an initial supposition, that in acting as an agent who wins fame, Penelope threatens to disrupt the social norms. The way other characters talk about her with suspicion is a reflex of Agamemnon's discourse, mentioned earlier, about a woman's fame discussed earlier. The suitors encourage Telemachus to reassert some order—to "send your mother away, order her to marry a man / whomever her father bids and is pleasing to her" (μητέρα σὴν ἀπόπεμψον, ἄνωχθι δέ μιν γαμέεσθαι / τῷ ὅτεῳ τε πατὴρ κέλεται καὶ ἀνδάνει αὐτῇ, 2.113–14).

When Penelope speaks of herself, we can see some of these forces internalized. After she discovers that her son has left Ithaca, she gathers her serving women and expresses her grief as a woman who already lost an excellent husband and has now lost a son (4.724–28). In this speech, she expresses *her worth* in terms of the worth of these male relatives: her lion-hearted (θυμολέοντα) husband, surpassed all the Danaans in every virtue (παντοίῃσ' ἀρετῇσι κεκασμένον) and has great fame (κλέος εὐρὺ), while her dear son (παῖδ' ἀγαπητὸν) "has been missing *without fame* from our home and I did not even hear he had left" (ἀκλέα ἐκ μεγάρων, οὐδ' ὁρμηθέντος ἄκουσα, 4.728). She laments to the herald Medōn that she wishes the suitors had dined their last meal in this home, because they are laying waste to the possessions of Telemachus (4.685–87). Her objection is based further on the former just behavior of her absent husband who never wronged anyone (κεῖνος δ' οὔ ποτε πάμπαν ἀτάσθαλον ἄνδρα ἐώργει, 4.693). Penelope uses authoritative language here with a gnomic

assertion about kingship to establish her husband's character (4.688–92):[56]

> ὑμετέρων τὸ πρόσθεν ἀκούετε, παῖδες ἐόντες,
> οἷος Ὀδυσσεὺς ἔσκε μεθ' ὑμετέροισι τοκεῦσιν,
> οὔτε τινὰ ῥέξας ἐξαίσιον οὔτε τι εἰπὼν
> ἐν δήμῳ; ἦ τ' ἐστὶ δίκη θείων βασιλήων·
> ἄλλον κ' ἐχθαίρῃσι βροτῶν, ἄλλον κε φιλοίη.
>
> "You did not listen to your parents when you were children,
> What kind of a man Odysseus was among your parents,
> He did nothing unfair nor said anything [unfair]
> Among the people? This is the custom of divine kings—
> They hate one man and love another."

The kind of authority Penelope constructs in this statement—the power of a king is in some way like that of a god—is distributed almost randomly (although she checks this with boundaries of what is proportionate [ἐξαίσιον] and later exempts Odysseus from the thematic transgression of committing an *atasthalon*—reckless, or foolish—act). Here, Penelope attributes to her husband a Zeus-like power, in effect limiting the agency of all others in his realm, including herself.

Penelope remains depicted as dominated by the loss of her husband and interested in asserting the prerogative of rule against the suitors for her son and husband's household. Her self-worth is wrapped up entirely with the male figures in the household and she almost perfectly represents the type of limited agency that serves to buttress (specific) male authority.

E. Closing the Door

Penelope's success in playing subservient roles makes understanding what kind of impact she had on ancient audiences, especially women, difficult. She demonstrates the ability to plan, to speak about herself, and to use language powerfully. But the self she describes is defined by her relationship with Odysseus and her possible success in epic terms—her *kleos*—is attainable within the constraints of *his* master narrative. One of her functions within the epic is to mourn the delayed completion of this narrative and to signal its completion through the resolution of her mourning. But we can also understand her as depicting herself as an ideal subservient. She reads the intentions of others and navigates between

them, affirming, to an extent, assertions in the previous chapter based on feminist standpoint theory, the idea that oppressed groups must develop a nuanced understanding of their oppressors in order to survive.

If we think back to Penelope's initial depiction in a state of paralysis, we can better appreciate the way gender impacts and shapes her characterization. The epic allows a latent tension in Penelope's passivity, however: when she is described in Book 4 as neither eating nor drinking, but just "pondering over whether her blameless son will escape death or be cut down by the hands of the arrogant suitors" (ὀρμαίνουσ', ἤ οἱ θάνατον φύγοι υἱὸς ἀμύμων, / ἦ ὅ γ' ὑπὸ μνηστῆρσιν ὑπερφιάλοισι δαμείη, 4.789–90), we might consider labelling this rumination as another moment of helplessness; and yet, the epic compares her surprisingly to a lion turning in a circle of men (4.791–93) before she falls asleep.[57] Corinne Pache argues that Penelope's mourning, combined with the tension of the cornered lion, helps to enact a narrative that starts with grief and culminates with vengeance. While her own description of her mourning and anxiety echoes if not exceeds that of her husband (19.512–17), Penelope's escape from this grief comes only through the return of her husband, and her agency comes from securing his goals. But, as Pache argues, Penelope's grief is also significant in summoning the homecoming structurally (2016:16).

Penelope is, in part, a good wife because she is a good audience for Odysseus's tale.[58] Her social position makes her success—really, her survival—contingent upon her ability to read the intentions of those around her who have more power. Her careful and complex engagement with Odysseus and her testing must be viewed from a perspective that foregrounds her subservient social role and possible internalized oppression. It is tempting to sympathize with interpreters who believe that Penelope knows all along that the disguised beggar might be her husband in disguise.[59] Her reluctance to reveal this is connected to cultural demands of restraint and passivity. Indeed, a clue to Penelope's relationship with Odysseus—perhaps a reflection of their *homophrosunē*—emotionally emerges in a simile that describes their united reaction to the end of the test (23.231–40):

> ὣς φάτο, τῷ δ' ἔτι μᾶλλον ὑφ' ἵμερον ὦρσε γόοιο·
> κλαῖε δ' ἔχων ἄλοχον θυμαρέα, κεδνὰ ἰδυῖαν.
> ὡς δ' ὅτ' ἂν ἀσπάσιος γῆ νηχομένοισι φανήῃ,
> ὧν τε Ποσειδάων εὐεργέα νῆ' ἐνὶ πόντῳ
> ῥαίσῃ, ἐπειγομένην ἀνέμῳ καὶ κύματι πηγῷ·

παῦροι δ' ἐξέφυγον πολιῆς ἁλὸς ἤπειρόνδε
νηχόμενοι, πολλὴ δὲ περὶ χροῒ τέτροφεν ἅλμη,
ἀσπάσιοι δ' ἐπέβαν γαίης, κακότητα φυγόντες·
ὣς ἄρα τῇ ἀσπαστὸς ἔην πόσις εἰσοροώσῃ,
δειρῆς δ' οὔ πω πάμπαν ἀφίετο πήχεε λευκώ.

So she spoke, and his longing for mourning swelled within him still more powerfully—
He was weeping holding the wife fit to his heart, a woman who was completely trustworthy.
As when the land appears welcome to men as the swim
Whose well-made ship Poseidon has dashed apart on the sea,
As it is driven by the wind and a striking wave.
Then few men escape from the grey sea to the shore
As they swim and the bodies are covered with brine on their skin,
They happily climb on the land, escaping evil.
So welcome a sight was her husband to her as she looked upon him
And in no way could she pry her white arms away from his neck.

At first glance—and indeed, likely at second—this simile is a remarkable reversal of expectations and a powerful sign of the reunion of husband and wife.[60] It starts by comparing the happiness of their union to that of a shipwrecked man upon reaching land. An initial interpretation of the relationship between the narrative and the simile here would be to understand Odysseus as the tenor—the central figure of comparison—and the shipwrecked man as the vehicle (the object to which he is compared). Instead, the narrative sets such a possible expectation, then shifts from considering the reunion from Odysseus's perspective to make Penelope the tenor: she is the one so elated at the return of her husband that her happiness is like that of a nearly drowned man safely stepping on shore. The interests and the natures of both Penelope and Odysseus align through these images (Foley 1978:1).

This parallelism between husband and wife is deeply thematic and structural, taking us back to Books 5 and 6 and my earlier discussion of how swimming out of the sea is instrumental in Odysseus's reclamation of self.[61] Indeed, there is an argument to be made that this inversion endeavors to establish an emotional and ethical equality between husband and wife, one that recalls the ideal *homophrosunē* Odysseus himself articulates in Book 6. But I would like to unravel this reading a bit. Helene Foley has argued that the reverse-sex similes in the *Odyssey* (and

this one, in particular) explore the natures of masculine and feminine powers and communicate that each sphere must have necessary limitations for "a stable Ithacan culture" (1978:21). What this also means, is that now that Odysseus has returned, Penelope's potential power as ruler of Ithaca must be reined in through the reassertion of conventional gender roles. The simile, I think, indicates this too. First, the possibility that Penelope is, in some other version of this simile, the land—that unmovable object with no agency of its own—has too much gravity to avoid. In part, I think the simile is so striking because it relies on this expectation before breaking it. But in defying what is expected, the *Odyssey* performs a slightly different telling of its own story. Penelope here becomes the sailor who is washed ashore, but unlike her husband, her rescue has little agency of its own and is followed not by the reclamation of herself but by the re-submergence of herself into the identity of her husband.

When Penelope is described before the onset of the simile as "fit to Odysseus's heart, a woman who is faithful" (ἄλοχον θυμαρέα, κεδνὰ ἰδυῖαν, 23.232), she is steadfast and an object of desire like the land itself. When the *Odyssey* inverts the expected outcome and focuses on her joy, it does not multiply or alter her qualities: she is still allowed to be the happy survivor because she has been constant. Odysseus, on the other hand, will travel again, as he tells her in the next speech. In the total context, Odysseus as the land to which the desperate sailor clings is, although welcome, only temporary. Penelope's joy promises to be short-lived; and it is a joy that exists to make her a better fit for her husband.

To me, this simile is additionally important because it performs, in a way, the occlusion of Penelope's desire and agency, as it is relegated by the epic as a whole. The idealized *homophrosunē* requires an occlusion of the character and goals of the husband over the wife: Penelope's grief, hope, and activity are all subsumed—as secondary functions—in the language and experience of her husband and his *kleos*. She is reduced to the limitations of her feminized body by crying and wonder. And her agency, restricted by the plot of Athena (or Zeus; cf. Marks 2008) and constrained to conventional domains, has little room for growth, if she wants to avoid the dread fame that attends other women.

This is not, in any way, to underestimate Penelope's intelligence or her ability to survive. As discussed in the last chapter, feminist standpoint theory posits that the oppressed must learn to read the minds and intentions of their oppressors in order to survive—Penelope is a master of her situational context. She is, in this, a wildly successful product of the epic's culture. But if we are to consider her characterization, the Homeric

depiction of human psychology and its effects on audiences, then Penelope's mastery can have dangerous effects as a type of cultural discourse. As an ideal model, she shows and indeed enforces the limits within which women must operate in order to be considered good. Where her husband and son are shown using narrative to reshape the world around them and achieve their own goals, Penelope uses her language in the service of others and then disappears. Odysseus—even Telemachus—face an open-ended world after the reunion. Penelope, by the start of Book 24, is relegated to the past. She is a wife who is no longer lacking a husband: her story is over.

This investigation has made me reconsider Penelope as an example of a traumatized figure suffering from a depressive paralysis that comes from having little to no influence over her world. Unlike Odysseus and Telemachus, she is also depicted as a woman necessarily subject to a similar marginalization by discourse, what I have called a mutilation. As a woman, Penelope is disqualified from agency by a body that makes her susceptible to wonder and weeping; the agency she does receive comes only in prescribed roles. As a successful woman, then, she must inhabit her grief and her lack of agency until the return of her husband, after which she enjoys some mediated access to power.

Penelope's primary thematic role is to represent the desire of an incomplete story or *nostos*, and her grief is instrumentalized only to be resolved as part of the complexity of her husband's narrative turns. Penelope's sorrow may be connected to a resolvable narrative problem of a husband's absence, but her depiction recalls a much deeper and structural marginalization recognizable from modern research on a lack of agency and depression. Most troubling, if we consider Penelope as a potential agent or a realistic human mind, is the gap between the recuperation and rehabilitation available for her and that available for her male relatives. Even the best woman in Homer does not get to be a fully realized human being.

From the perspective of Homeric folk psychology, this means that the *Odyssey* acknowledges and embeds cultural discourse about women's minds, just as it does with other marginalized people. From the perspective of performance and reception, this means that while epic reflects the gendered structures of its audiences, it also reinforces and shapes audiences' expectations by performing them. Penelope, to paraphrase Agamemnon's words, becomes a woman famed for her excellence, but cursed to be forever under suspicion because of her gender.

1 In focusing on Penelope, I follow others who note the wide representative gap between the agency of female divinities and that of mortal women. Where Athena has been shown to be in control of the *Odyssey*'s narrative on the part of enforcing a male hierarchy through the instrumentalization of some women (see esp. Murnaghan 1995), other female divinities function to threaten the attainment of Odysseus's narrative goals; cf. Schein 1994:21; see also Holmberg 1995:107–12.

2 For women in the *Odyssey*, see Jensen 1994: Schein 1994; Rougier-Blanc 2009; and Saïd 2011:258–314. For the tensions between masculine and feminine polarities in the *Odyssey*, see Chevrier 2014. For the way male domination in early Greek poetry ensures that "female voices ... [are] inevitably overcome or assimilated into the male narrative and/or power structure," see Holmberg 1995:106; see also Foley 1994:93. On the suppression of female agency and the instrumentalization of female suffering, see, recently, Christensen 2019.

3 For Penelope's narrative desires as always secondary to those of males, see Holmberg 1995:104.

4 The term "false consciousness" is used from Marxist criticism, first appearing in Engels' correspondence to Franz Mehring (1893). For a critique of MacKinnon's language and an exploration of the nuances of character and choice available to feminist interpretations, see, e.g., Abrams 1990, who prefers the term "ideological determination."

5 See Cussins 2001 for the impact of body image in current mental health.

6 On the devalued state of women's mental health in cultural and political economy, see Bondi and Burman 2001.

7 Therapy can at times exacerbate that sense: on medical models of mental health that prize autonomy and "bounded individuals" and that disavow "characteristics ... labelled as feminine," see Bondi and Burman 2001:9–10.

8 Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) has also been shown to have positive effects. See Lopes et al. 2014 for a comparative study of NT and CBT—both therapies appear to show better long-term outcomes than pharmacotherapy. Talking therapies may still privilege heterosexual and male-dominated hierarchies; cf. Bondi and Burman 2001:10–11.

9 See Minchin 2001:185–189 and 2007:285–81; cf. Alden 2017:13, 130–31. In general, this is a reflex of the cultural domination of women in Ancient Greece reflected in Greek poetry. For the way male domination in early Greek poetry renders "female voices ... inevitably overcome or assimilated into the male narrative and/or power structure," see Holmberg 1995:106.

10 See especially Katz 1991; Felson-Rubin 1994; Clayton 2004; and Alden 2017, chapter 4; cf. Doherty 1992; Foley 1995; and Gregory 1996.

11 Cf. Penelope's similar prayer to Artemis at *Od*. 20.61–65.

12 See Foley 1995:97–100 for a discussion of the forces motivating these decisions.

13 Barbara Clayton sees Penelope's weaving-unweaving as a "feminine alternative to masculine discourse" contained within the *oikos* (2004:42). For wider ancient and modern audiences, I suspect the effect of the text is still to enforce a model of silence and subservience for women.

14 As Blundell (1995:56) notes, "... their relationship, though complementary, is also asymmetrical in terms of power and status"; cf. Wohl (1993:19–20) that the "romantic notion" of the *homophrosunē* between husband and wife obscures, in Homer, the "bedrock

of violence upon which marriage stands" (22); cf. Hernández 2008:39–40.

15 On mental similarity between Odysseus and Penelope, see Schein 1994:23–24; Blundell (1995:55–56) suggests that Penelope is much more ambiguous and complex than this.

16 For female glory and heroism in Homer, see Rougier-Blanc 2009.

17 Foley 1995:96: "In short, Penelope is not fully herself without her husband."

18 See Holmberg 1995:104.

19 Cf. 8.74 (the quarrel between Odysseus and Achilles) and 9.20 (Odysseus's beginning of his own story).

20 See Zeitlin 1995 for a discussion of the theme of (in)fidelity in the *Odyssey*.

21 ἡ δὲ βασσάρα / σεμνῶς κασωρεύουσα κοιλανεῖ δόμους. The Scholia to Lykophron preserve an altogether more striking account (attributed to the fragmentary historian Douris = FHG II 47942) that Penelope had sex with *all of the suitors* and gave birth to Pan.

22 Alden (2017:115) says little about Agamemnon's implicit judgment; Currie (2012:197–98) suggests that the audience would have sensed different layers in the tradition about Penelope. Doherty (1995:109) notes a contrastive treatment of transgressive women and men in the underworld. For Murnaghan (2011:107) the presentation of Penelope is "an exception to a general rule" of misogyny. Thanks to Deborah Beck for sharing an early version of her work on similes in the *Odyssey* with some of this bibliography.

23 For women as objects in Homeric ideology, see Franco 2012:57–58. Schein (1995:23) argues that Odysseus's *kleos* depends on regaining Penelope; cf. Levaniouk 2011:266–67.

24 For Penelope's contrast with Helen and Klytemnestra, see Murnaghan 2011:124 and Franco 2012:60–61; cf. Atchity 1987:21. For parallels between Helen and Penelope in terms of "scenarios of love and loss," see Marquardt 1989:246–48. For Klytemnestra as an example of how a woman can ruin a *nostos*, see Nagy 1999:36–39.

25 For this ambiguity, see Christensen 2019.

26 See the discussion of Athena's comments to Odysseus in Book 13 in conjunction with Agamemnon's complaint in Murnaghan 2011:88–89.

27 For Penelope's motivations in delaying the full recognition and the use of the bed motif, see Murnaghan 2011:102–4. For a discussion of its symbolism and relation to the theme of fidelity, see Zeitlin 1995:127–37.

28 See Murnaghan (2011:104) for Penelope's anxiety about being tricked and her exoneration of Helen.

29 Elmer (2013:44–47) glosses *apēnēs* as indicating refusal or rejection, in contrast with a speech-act like *epainos*.

30 See, for example, Graver 1995 and Franco 2012:62–63.

31 For the historical role of women in funerals and lamentations, see especially Alexiou 2002, chap. 1.

32 δακρύσασα δ' ἔπειτα προσηύδα θεῖον ἀοιδόν, 1.336.τῆς δ' ἀδινὸν γοόωσα μετηύδα Πηνελόπεια, 4.731.καί ῥ' ὀλοφυρομένη ἔπεα πτερόεντα προσηύδα, 17.40.

33 For Penelope's weeping in comparison to other epic figures, see Monsacré 2018: chapter III.4 ("The Language of Tears").

34 For this scene see earlier (Chapter 2) and Hernández 2008:44–48; cf. Pucci 1987:195–208;

Holmberg 1995:103; Clayton 2004:36–37. For Telemachus's rejections of his mother as the emergence of a "gendered ideological stance," see Underwood 2018:61–62.

35 For Penelope's wonder as an indication of displacement, as well as a lack of voice and agency, see Underwood 2018:89–98. Later, Underwood argues that this wonder helps her anticipate the changes necessary for her situation (107).

36 For response to possible divinity, see Telemachus's reaction to Athena's first appearance (1.319– 24; cf. Athena's transformation at Pylos, 3.373) and a reaction to a bird omen (2.155). For Odysseus, see 16.178-79 and 24.394.

37 Cf. *Il*. 1.199 (Achilles's response to Athena); 3.342 (both sides watching a duel); 3.398 (Helen responding to Aphrodite); 4.79 (mortal response to Athena in battle); 8.77 (fear in battle); 23.728 and 23.815 (audience response to athletic combat); Achilles's response to seeing Priam (24.482).

38 Murnaghan (1995:68–70) argues that Athena actively engages when Penelope's thoughts (affections and sexuality) threaten to distract her from the major plot of reuniting with Odysseus.

39 On Athena's control of the situation, see Murnaghan 1995:70–71.

40 For Penelope realizing that her reputation is dependent on Odysseus, see Levaniouk 2011, chap. 15.

41 For Penelope as constrained by social pressures, see Murnaghan 2011:91–92.

42 For the controversy and Penelope's likely ignorance, see Katz 1991:77–191; Felson-Rubin 1994:3345. She is her "husband's unaware helper" (Franco 2012:62).

43 She has been thematically anticipated in both roles by Arētē and Nausikaa. For similarities between Arētē and Penelope, see Doherty 1995:76–83 (cf. Wohl 1993:27–32; Louden 2011:94–95). For the depiction of noble women in the *Odyssey* and the importance of their hospitality, see Pedrick 1988.

44 Odysseus (in disguise) tells the enslaved people that he has a message to deliver to her (and may have been understood by ancient audiences as going to test her; 15.41, 15.314; cf. 16.130).

45 Chaston 2002:3: Penelope "effectively rules Ithaca."

46 It is worth noting that she speaks harshly of Antinoos, in particular, perhaps again drawing on her feeling that he should be especially observant of *xenia* in a house where his own father was protected (19.500–504).

47 οὐ γὰρ ἔπ' ἀνήρ, / οἷος Ὀδυσσεὺς ἔσκεν, ἀρὴν ἀπὸ οἴκου ἀμῦναι. /εἰ δ' Ὀδυσεὺς ἔλθοι καὶ ἵκοιτ' ἐς πατρίδα γαῖαν, /αἶψά κε σὺν ᾧ παιδὶ βίας ἀποτείσεται ἀνδρῶν

48 For the interpretive challenges of this passage, with an ample bibliography, see Alden 2017:137–146.

49 For the plot of Books 18–21 as structured by the uncertainty of Penelope's choice to stay in the palace or marry a suitor and leave, see Katz 1991:115–20. For an overview of responses to Penelope's behavior in Books 18–21, see Foley 1994:101. For her ambivalence in general, see Austin 1975:228–29. On the ethical nature of Penelope's decision to use the contest of the bow, see Foley 1994:103–4.

50 Schol.V ad *Od*. 19.328 "'Human beings are short-lived:' she says this as a euphemism and is really talking about *glory*. For, since human beings have brief lives, they need to do well in

their life and leave behind a good reputation about themselves," ἄνθρωποι δὲ μινυνθάδιοι τελέθουσι] τοῦτο πρὸς τὴν εὐφημίαν εἴρηκεν, καὶ ἀναφέρεται ἐπὶ τὸ κλέος. ὀλιγοχρόνιοι δὲ ὑπάρχοντες οἱ ἄνθρωποι ὀφείλουσιν εὖ πράττειν ἐν τῷ βίῳ, καὶ φήμην ἀγαθὴν περὶ ἑαυτῶν ἀπολείπειν.

51 For Phemios as a singer and not a rhapsode in the classical sense, see Nagy 2009:370–371. On the importance of Penelope describing the poetry as enchantment, see González 2015:192–193, who argues against the interpretation that these songs are in some way novel.

52 For a discussion of whether or not this passage points to novelty or recency and the importance of understanding that novelty does not preclude traditionality, see D'Angour 2011:184–89; cf. Scodel 2002:53–54 and Nagy 1990:67–70 for the song as "news"; cf. Petropoulos 2011:46–48.." De Jong calls this an indirect advertisement for the *Odyssey* itself (2001:38).

53 For Penelope's weaving as a narrative of displacement, see Underwood 2018:110–18.

54 For the shroud as a sign of closure and open-ended narratives, see Chapter 9 (with bibliography).

55 Alden (2017:102) notes that Penelope is superior to these women because she did not accept a replacement for her husband; cf. Katz 1991:4; Sammons 2010:59–63.

56 For the gnomic character of these lines, see Scholia PQ ad. Hom. *Od*. 4.691: "this is the way of kings, to hate one person but love another, etc. This line is presented gnomically about kings, because they hate some people but love another. This is not strictly applicable to Odysseus. Therefore, the line must be taken for use in this particular situation."

57 Foley (1978:10) sees Penelope as compared to a besieged warrior and also compared through this to Odysseus and Telemachus; cf. Felson-Rubin 1994:21.

58 Penelope listens and learns from the speeches of others; while the suitors dine, Penelope "was listening to the speeches of the men in the hall" (ἀνδρῶν ἐν μεγάροισιν ἑκάστου μῦθον ἄκουε, 20.389). As Doherty observes, Penelope functions as the "ideal audience for the finished poem" and does not get to tell her own tale (1992:170–71); cf. Hernández 2006:49; Felson-Rubin 1994:171–72.

59 For Penelope as consciously recognizing Odysseus, see Harsh 1950; Stewart 1976:103–4; Emlyn-Jones 1984; and Murnaghan 2011:101–3. For a subconscious recognition, cf. Amory 1963 and Austin 1975:235–37.

60 For this simile, see Zeitlin 1995:145–47. For this as one of the reverse sex similes in the epic, see Foley 1978.

61 See de Jong (2001:559) for the ways in which this echoes Odysseus's experience, along with additional bibliography.

8

The Politics of Ithaca

From Collective Trauma to Amnesty's End

συγγνώμη τιμωρίας κρείσσων

Pardon is better than vengeance.

Pittacus, [Diogenes Laertius]

The Renaissance humanist Leonardo de Bruni remarks of Homer that "some people think that his poetry is a complete education for life."[1] If we are to grant even a hint of such fullness to the *Odyssey*, then it cannot principally be about the life of one person without also including the range of *other* people who make that life possible. In the last two chapters, I moved from the rehabilitation of an individual through narrative to the impact that narrative can have on those who receive it, especially those without social power. Expanding the investigation into narrative's effects on people requires a reconsideration of Odysseus's world outside of his family, his community. While the epic itself takes pains to mark the behavior of the suitors as transgressive and Odysseus's punishment of them as divinely sanctioned, it nevertheless leaves room more for complex interpretations. Two steps will assist in re-framing the behavior of the suitors and the events within the Ithacan community as having deep psychological resonance too. First, an elucidation of the political situation in Ithaca will help us understand the epic's own view on the impacts of group narratives on the communities depicted in Homer. And, second, a clearer picture of the political situation may allow us to see the Ithacan people as suffering from a collective trauma, which partly explains their behavior before and after Odysseus's return. Of utmost importance is that the families of the suitors assemble, debate, and about half decide to avenge themselves on Odysseus. This conflict contains the overlay of

several types of discourse that touch upon justice, the nature of politics, and the relationship between the individual and the state.

Homeric epic indicates, I believe, how narratives themselves can cause psychological harm and yield peoples and even states who are in some way dysfunctional because of memory or story. In the following chapter, I will first consider again the collective nature of Homeric folk psychology, then the political situation on Ithaca, turning in particular to the possibility that its community is represented as traumatized in two ways: a lack of political order, which creates an immanent sense of helplessness, and a fractured community, which undermines a sense of coherence and belonging. These two proposals may then help to explain some of the actions of the people in this community, while also presenting a defense of the suitors. I will close this chapter by exploring the relationship between such a traumatized community and the problematic end of the *Odyssey*, which appears to erase the psychological and political challenges through *eklēsis* ("amnesty," 24.485–86). I will introduce some ancient and modern parallels as a way to think through the effects this particular sequence of actions had on ancient audiences.

A. Revisiting the Ithacan Public: Collective Responsibility and Trauma

The collective is more important to the *Odyssey* than most of its modern readers typically acknowledge. More expansive questions interlaced with individual concerns throughout the epic encourage its audiences to consider where authority resides in the state and the balance of responsibility between the ruler and the ruled. As a type of cultural narrative therapy—as I term it in the Introduction—epic engages not just with the maladaptations of individuals, but also with the dysfunctions of the state they make up. Collective psychology is individual in the aggregate; but as readers with individual rather than collective minds, the corresponding implications and messages of the epic can be hard for us to hear. For these reasons, among many, it is tempting to imagine epic performance emerging as an opportunity for audiences gathered in communities to think through the relationship between the narrative-self and the larger political entities within which that self is defined.

When it comes to groups and collective behavior, Homeric epic, as the product of a repeated performance context, reflects the beliefs and

behaviors of its audiences. But epic's import goes further: as a culturally authorized species of discourse, it enforced beliefs by reflecting them. In such a capacity it was also a purveyor of what historians have called social memory, a term for the way groups use narratives from the past to shape their cultural identity.[2] And its therapeutic impact may be particularly important here. As Peter Kellerman (2007) describes in his work on Sociodrama, milestone social events such as weddings, funerals, or other festivals produce powerful opportunities for the formation and reconsideration of group identities. Rituals or interventions often develop in these contexts to help groups cope both with general trauma—death, aging, etc.—and idiopathic suffering, a particular war or a natural disaster. It may well be that during its development in such a ritual context, the *Odyssey* developed its political themes in response to audiences traumatized by political upheavals and civil strife. In the last generation, social scientists and psychologists have reflected upon the impact that cultural groups have in the aftermaths of dictatorships, wars, and genocides. They have emphasized the importance of "public acts of commemoration, cultural representation, and public political struggle" (Alexander et. al 2004:8) for addressing repressed feelings. The *Odyssey* may both reflect the need for such a process and act as a text that performs a representative function.

In particular, I want to consider the Ithacan people as a collective, suffering from the impact of traumatic experiences and the harmful effects of the cultural discourse of vengeance.[3] For individuals, the *Odyssey* is interested in the impact of a sense of agency on behavior. Like these individuals, the groups present on Ithaca mostly lack political agency and the correlative sense that they can have an impact on their future. So, I might argue that the suitors as a group are suffering from a type of helplessness because they are barred from acting in a culturally approved way—they seem sidelined from war, from earning riches through raiding—and because their agency is limited by an unclear political situation with no hope of easy resolution. In addition, this small community has suffered trauma through the unresolved loss of a large cadre of fighting men. The combination of this loss with an unclear political situation produces fear and suspicion. And this fear and suspicion function as motivation and outward claims to justify transgressive action.[4] So, one suggestion is that as a result of lingering trauma and unclear means to address it politically, the remaining Ithacans are incapable of adhering to normative behavioral standards.

This basic outline of the psychological profile of the community

provides both an anticipation of how audiences might have engaged with such topics along with an unlikely defense for the suitors. Even though the epic goes to great lengths to justify their deaths by portraying the suitors as engaged in acts of hubris and recklessness (*atasthalia*, again), it nevertheless makes them individuals and arguably provides some justification for their behavior in the frustrations of Ithacan life. The suitors and their families, in addition, can be seen as aristocrats struggling against a monarch.[5] Not only do the suitors have uncertainty about their future and an inability to affect it, but they lack precedents and paradigms to guide them in their current situation. We could make many of the same claims for Odysseus's companions who die before returning home.

The political drama is also about the impact of story or precedent; the people of Ithaca labor under contradictory pressures from cultural discourse. For the epic's audience, Ithaca and Odysseus's return provides another context for contemplating a theme we typically associate with the story of the *Oresteia*, the overlapping claims of vengeance and justice. From a cultural perspective, as I will discuss at the end of this chapter, the epic explores the logic of *tisis* (vengeance; payback) *ad absurdum*. Such a theme would have been critical in the epic's development in response to audience interests as Greek city-states evolved. But there is one essential difference between the *Odyssey* and the *Oresteia*: Orestes' tale is almost entirely confined to transgressive acts within a family. The *Odyssey* expands questions of payback and vengeance from the family to a larger group. In this adaptation, then, the *Odyssey*'s political character emerges as one of its most important features and throughout the epic we are asked to consider the needs and claims of the many against those of a single or a few. As Alex Loney argues in a recent book (2019), the system of vengeance is retaliatory and its power redounds upon individuals who have agency and control cultural narratives. Such a system, Loney suggests, appears through the epic as incapable of sustaining communal harmony. Within this narrative system, then, we find demands for action that threaten to unmake the system itself (thus constituting a dysfunctional discourse). In its exploration of the collective experience of cycles of suffering and vengeance in a political context, the epic invites both individuals and groups to think about issues of responsibility for public stability. The epic's end is potentially one of *aporia*.[6] This moment helps the audience engage in a collaborative exploration of the assumptions and values of maladaptive politics.

B. Trauma 1: Ithacan Politics

To fully flesh out the experiences of the groups depicted in the epic, we need to explore a few types of potential trauma. Their political difficulties stem from a general confusion about who has authority and agency (and why) and a series of traumatic events, including the loss of an expedition of fighting men. While definitions of collective trauma emphasize that mere events are rarely traumatizing on their own, the persistence of the memory of such events and their instrumentalization in further group actions are seen as strong indicators.[7] My basic proposition is that the *Odyssey* presents the people of Ithaca in a state of political confusion that issues from a lack of clear institutions and results in behavior that transgresses what would be normal in a stable situation.

Let's start with politics and political institutions. Critics once wrote little about politics and Homer—but thanks to the work of Walter Donlan, Dean Hammer, and others, it is now more common to do so.[8] Nevertheless, the *Iliad* receives much more attention in this regard than the *Odyssey*. In part, this is because the *Iliad* is more obviously a political narrative: its coalition of heroes is a readymade vehicle for posing political questions. The *Odyssey* has, by comparison, been seen as the story of a home, an *oikos*.[9] But it is very much a text that has political questions at its center in the exploration of the boundaries between the home and the state.

Several authors have seen the Homeric *Iliad* as exploring the development and efficacy of political institutions and attitudes for their early audiences. Elton Barker (2009), for example, has seen the development of institutions where dissent is acceptable and David Elmer (2013) has shown the importance of public consent, both for the politics reflected in the poem and the aesthetics of the poem itself. In that epic, the two institutions of the council and the assembly operate in contrasting political contexts to explore their potential and limitations. The *Odyssey* does not reduplicate these institutions or their use. For one, even though Aigyptios pairs the assembly and the council in his first speech ("We have not had an assembly or a council since shining Odysseus left in his open ships," 2.26–27),[10] there is little evidence for an advisory council in Ithaca, or even in the other polities represented in the *Odyssey*. The idealized land of the Phaeacians has an assembly (8.8–15), where their king merely gives information and requests action (as in Pylos during Telemachus's travels). There is no discussion; there is no consent. The *agora* is a space where the Phaeacians play their games (8.107–10) and

where Odysseus begs "the king and all the people" (λισσόμενος βασιλῆά τε πάντα τε δῆμον, 8.157). This is, I think, Odysseus's perspective not just on what an assembly is for, but on what the body politic is: a king and his people. When Odysseus describes the ability of a great speaker, he emphasizes audience response: the people delight in his powerful speech and they look upon him as they would a god (8.170–73):

> ἀλλὰ θεὸς μορφὴν ἔπεσι στέφει· οἱ δέ τ' ἐς αὐτὸν
> τερπόμενοι λεύσσουσιν, ὁ δ' ἀσφαλέως ἀγορεύει,
> αἰδοῖ μειλιχίῃ, μετὰ δὲ πρέπει ἀγρομένοισιν,
> ἐρχόμενον δ' ἀνὰ ἄστυ θεὸν ὣς εἰσορόωσιν.
>
> "The god crowns some men with words—and the people
> look upon him in delight as he speaks unerringly in public,
> with gentle modesty, he is conspicuous among the gathered people,
> and they look upon him like a god as he walks through the city."

As others have noted, Odysseus's language here echoes an important moment from the beginning of Hesiod's *Theogony* (81–93), where a king's ability to use speech is related to that of poets: in that passage, while the king's aesthetic ability is indeed praised, his ability to *resolve a conflict among his people* is the primary point.[11]

Where Odysseus sees the assembly as a place of performance and narrative control instead of for the resolution of conflicts, his epic also provides other unclear messages: in Demodokos's story, the wooden horse sits in the Trojan agora (8.502–10) and their inability to take good advice in this assembly place led to their accepting it. Odysseus forms assemblies among his own men in the story he tells three times: each one has him proposing a plan that is accepted without debate: first, he tells them they are going to split up and investigate the island of the Kyklopes (9.171); next, he tells them they are going to stop on Kirkē's island (10.187); finally, when they are on Thrinakia, Odysseus gathers his men and tells them not to eat Helios's cattle (12.319).[12] In this last instance, once a month has passed (according to Odysseus), Eurylokhos gathered the men to counsel a devious plan while Odysseus was asleep and they all assented together to sacrifice the cattle to the gods.[13] The line of assent ("Then the rest of the companions gave their assent" ἐπὶ δ' ᾔνεον ἄλλοι ἑταῖροι, 12.352) recalls collective decision making in the *Iliad*. In Odysseus's tale, however, when the companions make a decision on their own, it has ruinous consequences. It is not hard to imagine that this theme might

have appeal for those who distrust participative governance, those who lean towards autocracy or something like it.

An additional reason the political themes of the *Odyssey* are less considered is that Ithaca's own institutions seem unclear or in flux.[14] Readers have questioned the sense of this political vacuum: where does Laertes fit in this absence?[15] Were the institutions of Ithaca so weak that without Odysseus there was no governance at all or was it all so well ordered that government was unnecessary?[16] These ambiguities are in part a result of the *Odyssey*'s Panhellenic character: the epic cannot reflect the particular institutions of an individual state. But the *Iliad*'s political institutions of the oligarchic council and the more democratic assembly reflect structures developing throughout Greece in the archaic age.[17]

Let's continue this investigation by questioning what the poetic Ithaca is. First, the physical: The epic refers to an island named Ithaca, but it does not seem to exist as a solitary political entity. Where other states in the Homeric epics have city names—thus perhaps priming ancient audiences to think about *poleis*—Ithaca is an island and not a city.[18] When Odysseus first describes his home, he mentions that it has a conspicuous mountain and that it is near three other islands: Doulikhion, Samē, and Zakunthos (9.23–24). This fact is repeated later by Telemachus, when he says that the suitors all come from Ithaca and these same three Islands (*Od.* 16.122–25; cf. 19.130–31). If we accept that the wooing of Odysseus's wife is an attempt at a political position of power, then the implication is that the Ithacan political entity is a state that includes *at least four islands*. The perspective of the *Iliad* provides some help here—although it is by no means necessary that the epics present identical kingdoms (*Il.* 2.625–37).[19] The catalogue of ships has Odysseus leading the Kephallanians, along with those from the islands Zakunthos and Samos. Doulikhion has its own leaders, but its contingents are placed alongside those of Odysseus. The greater size of Doulikhion, which has forty ships to Odysseus's twelve in the *Iliad*, is maintained in the *Odyssey*, which in the catalogue of the suitors names fifty-two from Doulikhion, twenty-four from Samē, twenty from Zakunthos, and only twelve from Ithaca (16.247–51).[20] Later, Laertes implies that he conquered Nērikos, a city on the harbor of Ithaca, when he was king of the Kephallanians (*Od.* 24.376–78).[21] In the *Odyssey* itself, then, Ithaca is part of a political realm united by conquest, and it is the least populous of the islands in the realm.[22]

This exposition frames some the confusion presented by Ithacan politics: the polity that Odysseus rules includes the single island as well as

a confederacy. A second point is that the political theater of the *Odyssey* within the epic has multiple internal constituencies: Odysseus's family, the suitors, and their families, who come from multiple islands. And each of these groups may act as stand-ins or representations of external audiences with similar outlooks. The political range represented here is expansive enough to naturally evoke a theme of an *oikos*/*polis* conflict, but flexible enough to admit dynamics of class, type of government, and competing claims to power.

One political organization, which appears operative in the background, may be that of a confederation ruled by one. When Odysseus meets his mother in Book 11, he asks if his *geras* ("possession," "right," "sphere of influence") belongs still to his father and son (*Od.* 11.174–76).[23] Later, Telemachus imagines that his mother will choose to marry Eurymakhos, which will give him his father's *geras* since the Ithacans also honor him and he is the best remaining man (15.518–22). *Geras*, which is in the *Iliad* the material token of public position, seems instead here to indicate the public position of honor, unless we do accept that Penelope herself is the physical token whose possession secures the symbolic place of the sovereign.[24] But even this rather Iliadic approach is undermined at the beginning of the *Odyssey*. During Book 1, Antinoos wishes that Telemachus may never be king, "which is his right by birth" (ὅ τοι γενεῇ πατρώϊόν ἐστιν," 1.387). Although Antinoos concedes that he stands to inherit power, Telemachus suggests that someone else could be king without his death (1.389–98):[25]

"Ἀντίνο', εἴ πέρ μοι καὶ ἀγάσσεαι ὅττι κεν εἴπω,
καί κεν τοῦτ' ἐθέλοιμι Διός γε διδόντος ἀρέσθαι.
ἦ φῂς τοῦτο κάκιστον ἐν ἀνθρώποισι τετύχθαι;
οὐ μὲν γάρ τι κακὸν βασιλευέμεν· αἶψά τέ οἱ δῶ
ἀφνειὸν πέλεται καὶ τιμηέστερος αὐτός.
ἀλλ' ἦ τοι βασιλῆες Ἀχαιῶν εἰσὶ καὶ ἄλλοι
πολλοὶ ἐν ἀμφιάλῳ Ἰθάκῃ, νέοι ἠδὲ παλαιοί,
τῶν κέν τις τόδ' ἔχῃσιν, ἐπεὶ θάνε δῖος Ὀδυσσεύς·
αὐτὰρ ἐγὼν οἶκοιο ἄναξ ἔσομ' ἠμετέροιο
καὶ δμώων, οὕς μοι λῆΐσσατο δῖος Ὀδυσσεύς."

"Antinoos, even if you are annoyed at whatever I say,
I would wish to obtain even this should Zeus grant it.
Do you really think that this is the worst thing to obtain among men?
Indeed, to be king is not at all bad. A king's house grows rich

quickly and he is more honored himself.
But, certainly, there are other kings of the Achaeans, too,
Many of them on sea-girt Ithaca, young and old,
who might have this honor, since shining Odysseus is dead.
But I will be master of my household
and my servants, the ones shining Odysseus plundered for me."

In the ancient scholarly tradition, this speech is seen as heavily rhetorical and clever; according to one commentator, Telemachus is indirectly responding to Antinoos's wish that he never be king (Schol. EH ad *Od*. 1.389 ex). This passage speaks both to Telemachus's internal fantasy of control in a world where he has little agency and the channeling of a cultural fantasy about the privileges and prerogatives of a king. In addition, Telemachus's words attempt to disentangle the blending between household and polity. While such slippage may seem unexceptional here, in the context of Homeric language Telemachus's wording is hyperbolic or even comic when he claims that he wants to be *wanax* of his household. The only human *anak*s in the *Iliad* is Agamemnon; everyone else is a *basileus*.[26] Telemachus's strong response is in part prompted by the assault on his household goods and Antinoos's wish that he never be king; but both speakers are engaged in coping with a political system whose future is unclear.

To summarize, Ithaca's political borders expand beyond Odysseus's home and island; in addition, how one comes to rule within these boundaries is uncertain. Both the limits and the conveyance of authority are thus unclear. The pressure of one of these forces could have negative effects on a community's morale and foster an environment of suspicion and destructive competition. What Ithacans say about politics also conveys the political disorder and confusion. When Aigyptios stands to speak in Book 2, he notes first the absence of any type of political activity. And then he frames possible expectations for this polity (2.25–34):

"κέκλυτε δὴ νῦν μευ, Ἰθακήσιοι, ὅττι κεν εἴπω.
οὔτε ποθ' ἡμετέρη ἀγορὴ γένετ' οὔτε θόωκος
ἐξ οὗ Ὀδυσσεὺς δῖος ἔβη κοίλῃσ' ἐνὶ νηυσί.
νῦν δὲ τίς ὧδ' ἤγειρε; τίνα χρειὼ τόσον ἵκει
ἠὲ νέων ἀνδρῶν ἢ οἳ προγενέστεροί εἰσιν;
ἠέ τιν' ἀγγελίην στρατοῦ ἔκλυεν ἐρχομένοιο,
ἥν χ' ἥμιν σάφα εἴποι, ὅτε πρότερός γε πύθοιτο;
ἦέ τι δήμιον ἄλλο πιφαύσκεται ἠδ' ἀγορεύει;

ἐσθλός μοι δοκεῖ εἶναι, ὀνήμενος. εἴθε οἱ αὐτῷ
Ζεὺς ἀγαθὸν τελέσειεν, ὅ τι φρεσὶν ᾗσι μενοινᾷ."

"Hear me now, men of Ithaca, and what I will say.
We have not had an assembly or a council
since shining Odysseus left in his open ships.
But who now has assembled us like this?
What great need has come upon one of the young men
or one of those who was born before?
Has someone heard some news of an army arriving?
Or is he petitioning and speaking on some other thing?
He seems to me to be noble, divinely favored.
I pray that Zeus may bring him good, whatever he desires in his thoughts."

Aigyptios's words—occurring at an early point in the epic—provide something of a baseline for beliefs about the rights and responsibilities central to a political community. This is especially the case if we take seriously Kellerman's suggestion cited above about the social impact of milestone moments, events where communities gather and, through their actions (or inactions), articulate a collective sense of who they are. In a community like that of Ithaca, the ritual weight of the assembly would act to reinforce social hierarchies and a sense of who belongs where in the community. When Aigyptios speaks, he first wants to know *who* convened the assembly and for *what need*. His initial thought is to forestall any attack that threatens the city; his second is that there is some other, unnamed, public matter. From his perspective, the hierarchy of governmental functions is protection against external threat, then all else. This is, admittedly, a rather limited baseline for sustaining a community. When Telemachus answers, he says he is not pursuing either of these things, but instead a personal need of his household: the evils that have attacked his house (ὅ μοι κακὰ ἔμπεσεν οἴκῳ) and the death of the king of the state, his father (2.44–46). In expressing the trouble publicly in this manner, Telemachus either knowingly or ignorantly performs an elision of house and state: Odysseus was the fulcrum over which house and state balanced, without which now the two collapse.

One might argue that Telemachus believes that the political community exists to hear his complaint and then to respond to injustice collectively. And this, in the special context of the assembly, would amount to an affirmation of a particular view of collective action.

Telemachus's words, however, are not an appeal to a collective good, but rather to a collective obligation: he asserts that the suitors and people of Ithaca have failed to live up to their obligation to his absent father (and to the general demands of *themis*, "precedent"). He is arguing that they have failed to uphold their end of a political bargain. So, while Telemachus indicates the source of the problem, he extends blame to the entire community for their response.[27] Themes of responsibility and causality are central to the exchange in the assembly. Antinoos claims that they are not to blame, but it is Telemachus's mother who will not marry (2.85–88: "The Achaean suitors aren't responsible for this to you, but your dear mother is ... ," σοὶ δ' οὔ τι μνηστῆρες Ἀχαιῶν αἴτιοί εἰσιν, / ἀλλὰ φίλη μήτηρ ...).[28] In claiming *this* as the problem, Antinoos is actually using the assembly to pursue political action. Here, he echoes the language of *krisis* or judgment common to adjudicative gatherings: the suitors challenge Telemachus to restore the missing piece of the political puzzle. In this, we can see that the blurring between the private *oikos* of Odysseus and Telemachus has consequences. Political power is not just about the privileges of the ruler, but also the rights of the ruled. The suitors transgress their normal obligations in order to force a marriage. In the modern world, this could be considered a type of protest, an action Michael Nagler has described as a "strike."[29] Antinoos threatens that this will continue until the situation is resolved. By consuming the household of the absent king and breaking down the political order, the suitors enact the symbolic wasting of the polity.

If we were to imagine that an audience might not be predisposed against the suitors—or even more boldly that some might see the consumption of Odysseus's goods as a political act—it is easier to see the *Odyssey* as presenting a conversation about politics. It is clear in other political scenes that the suitors and Telemachus are each pursuing what they believe to be the necessary course of action. When Telemachus previously addresses the suitors in Book 1, he tells them to leave and eat their own possessions, rather than his without recompense (1.372–80). So, here, in Book 1, before the assembly in Book 2, Telemachus is trying to impose a story upon his experience: the suitors have taken his private goods and made them public; he is due payment—a material exchange that is later translated into a moral one when he and his father kill them. But the suitors, as I have implied, consider this to be a different kind of story altogether: the king's house relies, in part, on the people for its wealth. Now that the king is gone, who stands to benefit from this wealth? Who will carry out the responsibilities of the king?

Part of the political conversation is pursued when Odysseus and his family are out of the picture. Before turning to the epic's final assembly, it is worth noting that the suitors gather twice more as a deliberative group. Without the presence of Telemachus or the people, they do seem to make decisions together. In Book 4, when Telemachus's departure is discovered, they assent to Antinoos's plan to ambush Telemachus (4.660–73). A return to this topic when the ambush fails in Book 16 reiterates how the suitors use the assembly to make decisions. But this scene also brings the political divisions into sharper relief: because of the clandestine nature of their act, the suitors assemble *without anyone else* (16.361–62).[30] Here, they too turn a public space into a more private ground as they reflect on their failed action against Telemachus.

Antinoos casts their failure to slay Telemachus in political tones (16.374–92); after lamenting that Telemachus slipped their trap—and attributing the intervention to the gods, but also conceding that Telemachus is intelligent and a threat on his own—Antinoos turns to more general procedural issues:

> αὐτὸς μὲν γὰρ ἐπιστήμων βουλῇ τε νόῳ τε,
> λαοὶ δ' οὐκέτι πάμπαν ἐφ' ἡμῖν ἦρα φέρουσιν.
> ἀλλ' ἄγετε, πρὶν κεῖνον ὁμηγυρίσασθαι Ἀχαιοὺς
> εἰς ἀγορήν· —οὐ γάρ τι μεθησέμεναί μιν ὀΐω,
> ἀλλ' ἀπομηνίσει, ἐρέει δ' ἐν πᾶσιν ἀναστάς,
> οὕνεκά οἱ φόνον αἰπὺν ἐράπτομεν οὐδ' ἐκίχημεν·
> οἱ δ' οὐκ αἰνήσουσιν ἀκούοντες κακὰ ἔργα·
> μή τι κακὸν ῥέξωσι καὶ ἥμεας ἐξελάσωσι
> γαίης ἡμετέρης, ἄλλων δ' ἀφικώμεθα δῆμον.
> ἀλλὰ φθέωμεν ἑλόντες ἐπ' ἀγροῦ νόσφι πόληος
> ἢ ἐν ὁδῷ· βίοτον δ' αὐτοὶ καὶ κτήματ' ἔχωμεν,
> δασσάμενοι κατὰ μοῖραν ἐφ' ἡμέας, οἰκία δ' αὖτε
> κείνου μητέρι δοῖμεν ἔχειν ἠδ' ὅς τις ὀπυίοι.
> εἰ δ' ὔμιν ὅδε μῦθος ἀφανδάνει, ἀλλὰ βόλεσθε
> αὐτόν τε ζώειν καὶ ἔχειν πατρώϊα πάντα,
> μή οἱ χρήματ' ἔπειτα ἅλις θυμηδέ' ἔδωμεν
> ἐνθάδ' ἀγειρόμενοι, ἀλλ' ἐκ μεγάροιο ἕκαστος
> μνάσθω ἐέδνοισιν διζήμενος· ἡ δέ κ' ἔπειτα
> γήμαιθ' ὅς κε πλεῖστα πόροι καὶ μόρσιμος ἔλθοι."

> "... For he is smart in plans and thought on his own,
> and the people are no longer completely showing us favor.

Come, before he gathers the Achaeans in assembly.
For I do not at all think that he will delay at all,
but he will be extremely angry and he will rise and speak among
everyone that we were weaving sheer murder for him but we did not catch him.
They will not praise it when they hear these evil deeds,
and I fear that they will accomplish something terrible and drive us
from our land, and we will go to another's country.
But let us grab him and kill him outside of the city,
in the country or on the road. Let us seize his livelihood ourselves and his possessions,
once we divide them up among ourselves into portions.
We can let his mother have her home along with whoever marries her.
But if this speech is displeasing to you, and you want him
to live and to have his paternal possessions,
let us not consume his heart-pleasing possessions anymore
as we gather here, but let each man from his own home
seek to court her with bridegifts. Then she may marry the man
who gives the most and comes fated to her."

First, note that Antinoos has made Telemachus into an agent who can plan and threaten them on his own, thereby justifying his attempted murder. But beyond this assertion is concern about the political force represented by the people. Antinoos notes that the people no longer show the suitors favor and he fears Telemachus calling them to assembly and using the political institution against them. He goes so far as to imagine that Telemachus will use the institution to gain recompense for their attempt on his life, also sending them into exile, perhaps then reclaiming private goods through a public mechanism. Antinoos, however, proposes to end the threat by murdering Telemachus and forcing his mother to marry. His proposed division of that household uses thematic language (δασσάμενοι κατὰ μοῖραν ...) to reflect the creation of a community of honor within a community, confirming that the suitors are imagining themselves as some type of ruling bloc. Amphinomos speaks to counter this proposal (16.394–408), saying instead that they should first consult the will of the gods: the suitors approve this amendment and they return to Odysseus's home. The pleasure at this compromise, indicated by the narrative (406) is a marker of how undesirable the original proposal was, as well as being an indication of the participatory nature of the internal politics of the suitors. For all of their monstrosity in planning to kill Telemachus and

overstaying their welcome in Odysseus's home, these suitors seem to run an orderly assembly where they debate a proposed action and come to a consensus. These citizens appear to *want* to get along, to belong at the very least, to their own faction.

C. Trauma 2: Lack of Belonging

Reconsidering the conventional interpretation of the suitors increases our appreciation of the *Odyssey*'s depth of meaning, just as earlier in this book it was critical to grant more complexity to Odysseus's companions.[31] Such nuance is not at all ill-fit to Homeric epic. Indeed, one of the most remarkable things about the *Iliad* is how the enemy is neither vilified nor dehumanized; instead, the scenes inside Troy and among the Trojans help to provide a fullness to the range of human experience evoked by the poem.

My suggestion in reevaluating the politics of Ithaca is that its instability has created an environment of uncertainty and suspicion. The people of Ithaca are denied access to political agency because of the lack of clarity in their institutions and, in addition, they suffer a deficit in a sense of belonging because of the narrative traditions and identities that are denied to them by their current circumstances: they have no models for behavior and no cohort to belong to *apart* from the cohorts of mourners and suitors.[32] In Chapter 2, I outlined how the breakdown in traditional structures or the absence of an educative community contributed to a sense of Learned Helplessness in Telemachus. Previously in this chapter, I have suggested that the suitors are acting out politically in what amounts to the only form of non-violent protest available to them. In addition, I would like to suggest that both Telemachus and the suitors are products of their environments, the degradation of which has lowered what the social economist Mark Grenovetter has called behavior "thresholds," where collective choices that seem inconsistent with individual desires and beliefs can be explained by aggregation and the availability of new precedents.[33] From the perspective of collective trauma theory, the use of an event to define a collective identity is a marker of shared trauma.[34] Here, the discourse of *kleos* and paradigmatic myth has provided them no avenue for action, so they ruminate and distract themselves. None of those who remain in Ithaca have a culturally approved method by which to address their paralysis in life: they seem unable to go on their own heroic raid to secure wealth and glory or to win

a bride to secure a place in the political world. Their lived trauma, moreover, is loss compounded by uncertainty. Eventually, they engage in excessive consumption as a group. This framework can be extended to other epic characters as well: in the cases of the suitors and of Odysseus's companions, we have groups put under prolonged stress who are deprived of the ability to act. Such situations trigger emotional crises in individuals on a fundamental level in the misfiring of the fight-or-flight instinct.[35] When aggregated over a group and over time, this can be socially destabilizing. And this problem is not just one observed from the perspective of the sociology of economics. In writing about group behavior and the fear of death, Solomon, Greenberg, and Pyszczynski emphasize that when people lose confidence in "core-beliefs" they lack "a fundamental blueprint for reality" and lose their basis for "determining what behaviors are appropriate ..." (2015:48). Some may see it as a stretch to apply this formulation to the groups of people represented in the *Odyssey*, but at the very least it encourages us to think about the breakdown of expected social norms, which may be understood as motivating or even potentially justifying the aberrant behavior of citizen and companion.

We should not lose sight of the fact that in the assemblies discussed above Antinoos actively uses the public gathering as a place to pursue political action: he echoes the language of *krisis* or judgment that could happen in a public assembly. The suitors challenge Telemachus to ensure that his mother be married and someone take over the kingship. And Antinoos threatens that the overlap between the public space and Telemachus's household will continue until this situation is resolved. He puts it quite baldly: Penelope's generation of fame, that very thing so prized in epic, is directly related to Telemachus's suffering (2.123–28):

> τόφρα γὰρ οὖν βίοτόν τε τεὸν καὶ κτήματ' ἔδονται,
> ὄφρα κε κείνη τοῦτον ἔχῃ νόον, ὅν τινά οἱ νῦν
> ἐν στήθεσσι τιθεῖσι θεοί· μέγα μὲν κλέος αὐτῇ
> ποιεῖτ', αὐτὰρ σοί γε ποθὴν πολέος βιότοιο.
> ἡμεῖς δ' οὔτ' ἐπὶ ἔργα πάρος γ' ἴμεν οὔτε πῃ ἄλλῃ,
> πρίν γ' αὐτὴν γήμασθαι Ἀχαιῶν ᾧ κ' ἐθέλῃσι.
>
> "They will eat up your livelihood and possessions
> as long as she keeps this plan, the one that
> the gods are now harboring in her heart.
> Although she makes a great fame for herself,

she leaves you in want for a great part of your wealth.
But we will not go to our fields or to anywhere else
before she marries whomever of the Achaeans she chooses."

This passage represents a compression of another way of thinking of the distribution of resources in Ithaca, the distribution of story or fame, *kleos*. The suitors—like Telemachus himself before he goes on his journey—have been recipients of a cultural discourse that emphasizes, among other things, the importance of gaining fame through heroic deeds in war and journeys, etc. Here, Antinoos frames Penelope's seeking of fame as part of the problem: her refusal to wed prevents all of them from being *suitors* in a story of wooing (another heroic paradigm, as in the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women*, which tells the tale of Helen's wooing). And her fame in this regard is characterized as preventing Telemachus from being a lord of his home or a king of his people.

This conflict between the lives that the suitors are living and the stories they have heard can also be seen as a source of confusion and frustration, if not a trauma. Again, from the perspective of the psychology of death, as argued by Solomon, Greenberg, and Pyszczynski, this exchange has a clear balance: human beings find comfort in establishing our place in the world and securing symbols of connections that extends beyond our own lives—fame is one form of this (2015:105–9)—but excessive consumption is another, a transgression that emerges from a crisis of faith in the traditional system and a desire to cross all boundaries in a desperate flight from death (110–16). Fame lets us know that other people know who we are; possessions make us feel that we are important and have power; excessive consumption is a coping strategy that emerges in the absence of a sufficient sense of cultural place or communal meaning.

So, another proposition in Ithaca: confusion has developed from the overlapping of personal and public claims directly related to the status of Odysseus as the father of a household and a state. This pairs with frustration indirectly related to the mismatch between cultural discourse on masculine heroism and the reality lived by the suitors. Such contradictions thus underline a metapoetic point: the suitors have been sidelined from heroic narratives and from political activity and as such they are denied participation in tasks that might bring them fame, the very thing epic and its world offers as compensation for mortal life. The suitors do not suffer alone; all members of the Ithacan state have been stripped of agency in this vacuum of power.

D. The Epic's Final Assembly: Memory and Anti-Memory

The end of the *Odyssey*, as I will discuss at greater length in the next chapter, presents several challenges to its audiences. Among them is the fact that the suitors' families meet to debate the issue of pursuing vengeance against Odysseus and then split nearly down the middle on whether to go home or to take up arms. Two of the sources of collective trauma I have mentioned in this chapter so far are also operative: the people suffer because they do not have the institutional or political means to pursue justice against their ruler and they are constrained to make harmful decisions by the cultural discourse they have received. The epic's solution to its tensions—the deployment of an *eklēsis*, or amnesty—emerges in response to the political and discursive themes.

The theme of public memory is essential to the conflict in the political realm and the epic's resolution of amnesty. Indeed, before the speeches start in the first assembly, the narrator marks out the connection between memory and the suffering caused by the absence of loved ones. Aigyptios, who begins the assembly with a question about public need, is marked out for his private suffering, the loss of the son whom he cannot forget (2.15–24). When Mentor speaks later in the same assembly, he chides them for not remembering how kind like a father Odysseus was and demarcates the multiple constituencies involved in the problem: he singles out the people for sitting silent while witnessing such acts, when they outnumber the suitors (2.233–42):

> ὡς οὔ τις μέμνηται Ὀδυσσῆος θείοιο
> λαῶν, οἷσιν ἄνασσε, πατὴρ δ' ὣς ἤπιος ἦεν.
> <....>
> νῦν δ' ἄλλῳ δήμῳ νεμεσίζομαι, οἷον ἅπαντες
> ἧσθ' ἄνεω, ἀτὰρ οὔ τι καθαπτόμενοι ἐπέεσσι
> παύρους μνηστῆρας κατερύκετε πολλοὶ ἐόντες.
>
> "... because no one remembers godly Odysseus
> who ruled over them as was like a mild father?
> ....
> but now I find fault with the rest of the people, because you all
> sit in silence: you don't assail the suitors with words and restrain them,
> though you are many and they are few!"

Here, for the external audience, which was told of the lingering memory of Aigyptios's missing son, Mentor adds a different kind of memory—the public recollection of a good king. The invocation of Odysseus, moreover, brings together the two traumatizing forces I have mentioned so far in connecting a story about a king to a particular political order, replete with a set of obligations for the ruled. The social obligation intrinsic to the set of behaviors is indicated by marking this speech as *nemesis* (νεμεσίζομαι), whereby Mentor specifies that he is attempting to shame the people into culturally appropriate action.[36] But this articulation also reveals the complexity of the situation as well, as Peter Rose and others have noted, by depicting a triangulation of power among the people, an oligarchic class, and an absent king.[37] The *people* do not speak in approval of Mentor or Halitherses, both marked as ancient friends of Odysseus; instead, they wait to leave the assembly until the suitor Leokritos has dismissed them (2.257–59). And so, as Telemachus leaves Ithaca, he leaves a place of memories in tension: the lingering pain of the loss of loved ones and the diminishing recollection of a good king. This tension is paired with frustration over limited political agency: Penelope's *kleos* and the suitors' *hubris* both emerge from the same lack of resolution.

In the *Odyssey*'s presentation of an unstable political situation, which also features the public use of memory, the theme of politics converges with the functions of epic poetry, which was, in its public performance, a product and producer that simultaneously affirmed cultural identity and a form of social memory (as Steinbock 2013 outlines for other forms of myth).[38] Such a collective possession, however, is as contested in Homer as politics: memories of experiences and the songs that reshape them are at issue both in public and private contexts. In such a contest we witness the use of memory in the creation of identity and social cohesion.[39] The epic explores the way that different groups are motivated by memory to act and how they use memory in action. As implied by the split decision among the people at the end of the epic (discussed at greater length below), some of the constituencies of Ithaca stay loyal to the memory of Odysseus and uphold his political actions; others replace such a memory with the injustice they perceive they have received from Odysseus himself or his family.

In his recent book, Alex Loney (2019) surveys the function of vengeance as a theme in archaic Greek culture and its complex deployment and final abrupt conclusion in the epic's end. My own small addition is the assertion that, as a pattern from myth, vengeance-narrative functions as a type of cultural discourse that directs and constrains

members of that culture. Indeed, from a modern perspective, the allotment of blame and pursuit of a cause for suffering through scapegoating or continued violence is a clear sign of a traumatized group (see Smelser 2004:52–53). The *Odyssey* dramatizes the impact of the discourse of vengeance on several agents and, with its abrupt end, indicates indirectly that vengeance-discourse is harmful. And, as we have already seen, vengeance is connected with political activity, the ability to remember, and the worth of a human's memory.[40] It creates and sustains an economy of exchange all its own.

The efficacy of revenge as a narrative type is established in the first few books of the epic. As Telemachus makes clear in his comments to the suitors in Book 1 (1.372–80), one way to think of the conflict that motivates the events on Ithaca is as what transpires between households: he convenes the assembly as a witness to the fact that the suitors are eating up his livelihood (instead of their own). He hopes to use the assembly to publicly shame the suitors for doing this without recompense, focusing on language that invokes themes of vengeance ("they destroy the life of one man, without recompense," ἀνδρὸς ἑνὸς βίοτον νήποινον ὀλέσθαι, 377) and anticipating divine retribution if the people will not help him ("you would then die *without compensation* in my home," νήποινοί κεν ἔπειτα δόμων ἔντοσθεν ὄλοισθε, 380).[41] Telemachus's speech in Book 2, which returns to this language, is successful in two ways: it inspires pity in the *laos*, the people (οἶκτος δ' ἕλε λαὸν ἅπαντα, 81), and it puts the suitors on the defensive. Antinoos responds, accusing Telemachus, correctly, of trying to shame them, and apportioning blame (85–87) before shifting responsibility to Telemachus's mother. The discourse of vengeance, nevertheless, motivates a series of responses, typically seeking divine judgment—since vengeance is sanctioned by the gods, or not—and then action in accord with the sanction (or to avoid it). After interpreting a sign from Zeus as inauspicious, Halitherses speaks to the rest of the Ithacans, encouraging them to "figure out how to stop them first and have them stop themselves" before ruin falls upon them (2.167–69).[42]

These opening exchanges reinforce the argument that the Ithacan political game is mediated through a frame of vengeance around various constituencies, including the family of Odysseus, a group of aristocrats, and the wider community, the *laoi*. In this assembly, the people are presented as an audience to adjudicate the wrong perpetrated against Odysseus's household, but it stays silent rather than exercising any judgement (as feared by Antinoos in Book 16, above). Both parties leave

to pursue their own actions. There is, moreover, an essential asymmetry in their expectations and their stakes: the suitors attempt to frame the issue as one of who will govern the state; Telemachus sees the issue as one of a personal debt translated into vengeance. Thus, even though the scene is cast in terms of a more complicated political reality, the epic's action plays out as one of confusion between the rights of a household, an *oikos*, and what some have described as a city. These are, again, discourses at odds—a vengeance pattern is based on *private* claims; political solutions—later justice—are evaluated for *public* impact.

The story-pattern of vengeance eventually implicates all of the major players in the epic. It is clear that, from the perspective of Odysseus's household, the suitors' planned murder of Telemachus and the insults suffered by his father are personal acts that justify the murder of the suitors.[43] The suitors acknowledge in their assembly in Book 16 that they run the risk of political disenfranchisement from their plans: their attempt to control a communal Ithaca necessarily transgresses the boundaries of public and private, because the central power of the state is embodied by the household of a single family (even though there are many kings). At the same time however, after Odysseus kills the suitors, he engages in a similar crossing of boundaries when he explains their situation to Telemachus (23.118–22):

> καὶ γάρ τίς θ' ἕνα φῶτα κατακτείνας ἐνὶ δήμῳ,
> ᾧ μὴ πολλοὶ ἔωσιν ἀοσσητῆρες ὀπίσσω,
> φεύγει πηούς τε προλιπὼν καὶ πατρίδα γαῖαν·
> ἡμεῖς δ' ἔρμα πόληος ἀπέκταμεν, οἳ μέγ' ἄριστοι
> κούρων εἰν Ἰθάκῃ· τὰ δέ σε φράζεσθαι ἄνωγα.
>
> "For whoever has killed only one man in his country,
> one who does not leave many behind to avenge him,
> flees, leaving his relatives and his paternal land.
> And we have killed the bulwark of the city, the best by far
> of the young men in Ithaca. I order you to think about these things."

In taking the lives of the suitors, Odysseus knows that he has made himself a debtor on the scale of vengeance.[44] When he tells Telemachus to think about this fact, I can only imagine that the real target is an audience that might be triumphing over much at the suitors' demise. The plan that emerges is one of delay: Odysseus cloaks the murder in a wedding (a symbol of households united), hoping for some advantage from Zeus

(23.135–40).

In this section so far, I have argued that the community of Ithaca provides competing types of public discourse for its divergent audiences, one that prizes patterns of vengeance and loyalty to the returning king and another that aims toward something like justice and seeks a different political order. Both patterns result in the overlap of a private household and the larger city, because the politics of Ithaca are concentrated in a single family and place. This arrangement is potentially traumatizing, I think, because it provides neither a discourse of memory/fame nor the promise of engagement and participation in practical activities that might give the suitors and people of Ithaca the rights and responsibilities of being part of a community. The lack of clarity and operating precedents leaves the Ithacan community in a state of confusion and potential conflict. Within this confusion, we find a conflict over the place and power of vengeance and justice between a ruling family and the aristocrats, with the people serving as a largely passive audience. Precedent and paradigm—stories—and the personal histories of the participants and the tales they tell about themselves—memory—contribute the form and content that support the conflict.

It is against this unclear system with its overlapping debts of vengeance that we must understand the meaning of the epic's final assembly. Structurally and thematically, this meeting responds to the assembly of Book 2.[45] Accordingly, this assembly weaves together many of the political strands present in the epic. As Odysseus and his family dine in their *home*, the *fame* (here "rumor") of the slaughter spreads among the *people*; the family members collect the corpses and gather in a troubled assembly (24.410–21). This story is destabilizing and troubling; and in the assembly in Book 2, Aigyptios stands and is marked for his inability to forget the absence of his son Antinoos (ἀλλ' οὐδ' ὥς τοῦ λήθετ', 2.23). The father who speaks first now is Eupeithes.[46] Eupeithes is also marked by the possession of, or really obsession with, "unforgettable grief" for his son (ἄλαστον ... πένθος, 24.423). I will discuss the meaning of this phrase and its importance to the epic's themes of memory and continuity at greater length in the next chapter. But as Nicole Loraux (2006) elegantly observes, grief qualified as *alaston* (related to *lath-*, the root that also describes Aigyptios's inability to forget) is grief that cannot be forgotten.[47] In addition, by the time of Homer, the related noun *alastor* for avenger was active—the man who seeks and exacts vengeance is one who by nature cannot or will not forget.[48]

The evocation of this grief has specific ramifications for the

characterization of Eupeithes and for the story-pattern activated by his unresolved loss (another topic I will pursue in the following chapter). Ancient audiences grew up hearing these phrases again and again in similar situations, so just the mere utterance of a few words might recall entire narratives for them, just as a three-note sequence might call up for us a specific song.[49] In the poetic tradition, there appears to be special meaning in the evocation of *unforgettable grief* for parents. In the *Iliad*, Thetis has *penthos alaston* as she grieves for Achilles, who though still alive, will soon die and she can do nothing about it. In the Homeric *Hymn to Aphrodite*, the Trojan king, Tros, feels unforgettable grief when his son Ganymede disappears without trace; and in Hesiod's *Theogony*, Rhea is depicted as having the same emotional response when Kronos eats her children. In each case, the inescapable emotion comes from a situation outside the character's control, is related to a strong emotional bond, and happens during a time of paralysis or inaction. In addition, each story promises some type of compensation for the loss: Thetis's son receives immortal renown (although he must live on in torment); Tros receives immortal horses in exchange for his son; and Rhea pursues vengeance against Kronos through her son Zeus. There is, finally, an extreme power imbalance in each of these situations, as well (if we may read them from a political perspective).

When this pattern is applied to Eupeithes—and to the end of the *Odyssey*—it induces a variation that imperils the survival of Odysseus and threatens a different end to this tale. In the context of the theme of vengeance, Eupeithes has a claim to action that cannot be ignored. His grief activates a paradigmatic pattern: he must kill to exact vengeance for a child who has been killed. In short, Eupeithes addresses his own endless grief with a narrative solution, which, from his perspective, balances the debts between two households. In his speech (24.426–37), he attempts to translate his personal loss into a collective obligation by asserting that Odysseus failed to bring back the men he took to the war and *also* killed those who were best when he returned (427–28).[50] Rhetorically, he unites all of these actions into one transgressive act, when he exclaims: "this man has devised a *great deed* against the Achaeans" (ἦ μέγα ἔργον ἀνὴρ ὅδε μήσατ' Ἀχαιούς, 426). In the *Odyssey*, the description of an act as "great" in this way often indicates negative judgment and the expectation of some type of retribution.[51] By communicating Odysseus's misdeeds as a communal issue, Eupeithes makes retribution a communal obligation. This obligation is motivated, as well, by the social force of shame (24.432–37):

ἴομεν· ἢ καὶ ἔπειτα κατηφέες ἐσσόμεθ’ αἰεί.
λώβη γὰρ τάδε γ’ ἐστὶ καὶ ἐσσομένοισι πυθέσθαι,
εἰ δὴ μὴ παίδων τε κασιγνήτων τε φονῆας
τεισόμεθ’· οὐκ ἂν ἐμοί γε μετὰ φρεσὶν ἡδὺ γένοιτο
ζωέμεν, ἀλλὰ τάχιστα θανὼν φθιμένοισι μετείην.
ἀλλ’ ἴομεν, μὴ φθέωσι περαιωθέντες ἐκεῖνοι.

“Let us go. Otherwise we will be ashamed forever. This will be an object of reproach even for men to come to learn,
if we do not pay back the murders of our relatives and sons.
It cannot be sweet to my mind at least to live like this.
But instead, I would rather perish immediately and dwell with the dead.
But, let’s go so that those men don’t cross to the mainland first.”

But how convincing is this discourse of shame?[52] Halitherses rises to meet this speech and echoes the authoritative themes of the epic, recalling Zeus’s injunction from the beginning (1.32–34): the Ithacans’ suffering happened because of their own recklessness (ὑμετέρῃ κακότητι, φίλοι, τάδε ἔργα γένοντο, 24.455); “they” committed a “great deed because of their evil stupidity” (οἳ μέγα ἔργον ἔρεζον ἀτασθαλίῃσι κακῇσι, 24.458) —namely, wasting the possession and dishonoring the wife of the leader (24.450–66). Halitherses’s response does not dismiss the logic of vengeance, but instead presents a counter interpretation: he argues that in transgressing the boundaries of private possessions and the privileges of the city’s leading man, the suitors were the ones who committed the *great deed* that makes them liable for the very acts of retribution they just suffered at Odysseus’s hands. His warning is that any further acts on their part would just earn additional violent reprisals.

Here then we have a dramatization of the recursive logic of vengeance. The invocation of the theme itself initiates narrative traps that impose and inhibit action; in addition, the story pattern of vengeance is politically destabilizing because it necessarily pits private interests against public goods. This overlapping of interests, of course, is a common theme of Greek myth and poetry, central to the story of Antigone and tragic stories of the Trojan War (e.g., *Iphigenia at Aulis*). The *Odyssey*’s exploration of this tension does not merely dramatize the pressures, but it also places a burden of interpretation on the audience through absence of a clear resolution. The fractured Ithacan response, furthermore, is also a poetic reflection of civil factions. A segment, perhaps less than half, arms to

follow Eupeithes, the rest follow Halitherses home. It is at this juncture that the scene moves to Zeus and Athena and the possibility that Odysseus might be defeated; Zeus intervenes and declares there will be an *eklēsis* (24.478–86):

> τέκνον ἐμόν, τί με ταῦτα διείρεαι ἠδὲ μεταλλᾷς;
> οὐ γὰρ δὴ τοῦτον μὲν ἐβούλευσας νόον αὐτή,
> ὡς ἦ τοι κείνους Ὀδυσεὺς ἀποτείσεται ἐλθών;
> ἔρξον ὅπως ἐθέλεις· ἐρέω δέ τοι ὡς ἐπέοικεν.
> ἐπεὶ δὴ μνηστῆρας ἐτείσατο δῖος Ὀδυσσεύς,
> ὅρκια πιστὰ ταμόντες ὁ μὲν βασιλευέτω αἰεί,
> ἡμεῖς δ' αὖ παίδων τε κασιγνήτων τε φόνοιο
> ἔκλησιν θέωμεν· τοὶ δ' ἀλλήλους φιλεόντων
> ὡς τὸ πάρος, πλοῦτος δὲ καὶ εἰρήνη ἅλις ἔστω.
>
> "My child, why do you inquire or ask me about these things?
> Didn't you contrive this plan yourself, that Odysseus
> would exact vengeance on these men after he returned home?
> Do whatever you want—but I will say what is fitting.
> Since Odysseus has paid back the suitors,
> let him be king again for good and take sacred oaths.
> Let us force a forgetting of that slaughter of children and relatives.
> Let all the people be friendly towards each other
> as before. Let there be abundant wealth and peace."

When Zeus gently reminds Athena that it was her plan for Odysseus to come home and exact vengeance (ἀποτείσεται), he confirms the pattern of revenge narratives. His solution is (1) the swearing of oaths (ὅρκια πιστὰ ταμόντες), (2) the establishment of a stable political order with Odysseus as ruler (ὁ μὲν βασιλευέτω αἰεί), and (3) a forgetting of the murder of children and brothers (παίδων τε κασιγνήτων τε φόνοιο / ἔκλησιν). They should love each other as they did previously (τοὶ δ' ἀλλήλους φιλεόντων / ὡς τὸ πάρος) and enjoy "abundant wealth and peace." This proposal is, in one respect, about the stability and good of the state. It recognizes that vengeance is a problem whose anger-rooted solutions focus on inverting the relationship and status created by the original injustice, instead of establishing a social good.[53]

Note the nature and the limits of the solution: Zeus proposes a forgetting of the efficient cause of the next round of vengeance (the deaths of children and brothers), but says nothing about the crimes against

Odysseus's household.[54] (Or, as Erwin Cook suggests to me, Zeus tacitly assumes that a debt of violence has been cancelled out.) Consider the fantasy of this plan, beyond the ability to affect such a forgetting in the first place: What man could rule forever (αἰεί)? In what time and place beyond a Blessed Island of an eternal Golden Age has there ever been enough wealth and peace (πλοῦτος δὲ καὶ εἰρήνη)?

E. Amnesty and Exception

Zeus imposes a different story pattern on the end of the epic behind his words, one where a father eternally rules over a squabbling family, which really never has to worry about scarcity (so, one like Olympos). This superimposition of details along with the institution of the amnesty itself challenges the audience and engages directly with the themes of politics and memory. The end of this chapter and much of the next will consider different interpretations of how and why the epic ends in this way. In the next chapter, I will focus on the personal; in this one, my concern in addressing the political is to reach some conclusion about what this *eklēsis* entails, what it might mean to ancient audiences, and how it reflects upon the epic tradition and representations of human minds. In attempting to answer these questions, I will close by exploring some essential paradoxes of amnesties from the perspectives of both ancient and modern examples.

Let me restate that I believe an ancient audience would understand the political organization in Ithaca as unstable and subject to a contest of wills, essentially a city-state approaching what Greeks in the archaic and classical age would see as *eris* and *stasis*. Furthermore, I suspect that ancient audiences would understand that the people of Ithaca have been suffering from their loss and inability to pursue justice for those losses. And in understanding this suffering and the constraints on their actions, ancient audiences may have also sensed that the people depicted in the epic felt themselves forced to transgressive action. Whether or not they would have considered the people traumatized, as I entertain in this chapter, they would have likely understood that the Ithacans (even the suitors) felt their actions to be justified. In the split assembly of Book 24 (412–71), the Ithacans act, in part, as model for the audience. In splitting their vote on whether or not to pursue vengeance on Odysseus and his family, the epic's participants communicate that the resolution is neither neat nor easy. The ensuing amnesty is an indication both of the impossibility of ever effecting a resolution acceptable to all parties and a

reflection of the type of strategies required to keep a community at peace. From an anthropological perspective, this may be seen to be the only resolution for reciprocal violence. As such, we might view Odysseus as a "sacred king" (Girard 1977:266) who stands outside the laws he enforces in order to absorb the ritual pollution of killing for the stability of the state.[55]

Such a reading, while tempting from the perspective of ritual, may have resonated with some Odyssean audiences, but not others. A more political reading also emerges: it has been useful to frame the Ithacan conflict as one between a vision of the state that sees it as an extended *oikos* and one that imagines a *polis*, as I have.[56] But committing to the distinctions in this model also admits anachronism. Regardless of how we characterize the political institutions implicated in the poem's conflict, I believe that its participants' behavior is usefully understood if we see it as occupying a space of trauma and motivating the transgression of normative boundaries on both sides. Furthermore, I think that the dissonance produced by the imposition of such an anachronism replicates, in part, the tensions at play in a state of civil conflict. So, even though the epic tale may have developed as simply one of a conflict among households, the larger political possibility of its themes strengthened during the rise of Greek city-states. These ancient audiences would have heard and felt *stasis* or civil strife in the epic's action. In pursuing this comparison, I draw on the works of Nicole Loraux and Giorgio Agamben on amnesty and strife in Athens.

Political conflict puts into play the interests of various individuals against one another over and against the interest of the state, resulting in a blurring of boundaries not dissimilar to those I have emphasized in the epic's political play. In imagining the suitors, their families, and even their people as traumatized by the loss of a generation of warriors and the violent, even if justifiable, slaughter meted out by their returning king, the conflict involves confused places, definitions, and boundaries.[57] As described earlier in this chapter, the suitors were already engaged in political strife by seeking to marry the wife of the leading man and consuming his possessions. The repeated emphasis on the debts owed by the consumption of the private goods politicizes the household, as is clear from Telemachus's complaint; but the consumption of Ithacan youth on expedition with Odysseus and again within his home, to borrow from Agamben, *economizes* the *polis*. As is clear from the split vote of the Ithacans, despite divine support, the boundaries are sufficiently blurred to perpetuate strife.[58]

One of the problems with the *eklēsis* at the end of the *Odyssey* is that it, too, is transgressive—but for the genre. Epic is by nature about *remembering and forgetting* through selection. Forgetting the specific acts of this poem may be paradoxical, because we witness its recollection in hearing the poem. Additionally, there is an essential conflict between the single-ruler, Odysseus, and his need to claim *kleos*, and the claims of the people to remember and recall their own, one central to the endurance of Eupeithes's unforgettable grief.[59] Memory and forgetting are two sides of the same coin—the selection of one side is the suppression of the other in the creation of communal identity. One message from the end of the *Odyssey* is that we may choose our own narratives to fit the outcomes we want. We are active participants in the creation of social memory, a process that immortalizes some and enshrouds others with silence.

Such concerns were current in the lives of at least some ancient audiences. Many of these themes emerge as well in our records of the historical amnesty enacted in Athens in 403 BCE.[60] As preserved by the orator Andokides, with the exception of the deeds of the thirty, Athenians took an oath "not to speak ill to anyone of the things that had happened" (Andokides 1.80–81):

> ἃ δ' εἴρηται ἐξαλεῖψαι, μὴ κεκτῆσθαι ἰδίᾳ μηδενὶ ἐξεῖναι μηδὲ μνησικακῆσαι μηδέποτε.... ὅπως ἂν ὡς πιστότατα ἔχῃ Ἀθηναίοις καὶ νῦν καὶ εἰς τὸν λοιπὸν χρόνον...Ἐπειδὴ δ' ἐπανήλθετε ἐκ Πειραιῶς, γενόμενον ἐφ' ὑμῖν τιμωρεῖσθαι ἔγνωτε ἐᾶν τὰ γεγενημένα, καὶ περὶ πλείονος ἐποιήσασθε σῴζειν τὴν πόλιν ἢ τὰς ἰδίας τιμωρίας, καὶ ἔδοξε μὴ μνησικακεῖν ἀλλήλοις τῶν γεγενημένων.
>
> What has been declared to be erased, no one may ever obtain in private nor may bring it up for evil use again in the future ... so Athens might be most stable for now and the rest of time. ... [W]hen you [the democrats] returned from the Peiraios you left those things in the past even though you know you could have obtained vengeance because you were more eager to save the city than pursue private vengeance: so it did not seem right to you to use a memory of the past for ill against one another.

This passage commemorates a choice to not use public memory in a certain way. As Loraux notes, *mnēsikakein* "implies that one wields memory like a weapon, that one attacks or punishes someone, in short, that one seeks revenge" (2006:149).[61] This is not an undoing of memory, but a delimitation of its use for destabilizing vengeance, in essence a restoration of a boundary between the public and the private by limiting

the claims of the latter.[62] There is, of course, a tension in the power of poetry and public language and its capacity to commemorate or to silence. We can certainly identify in early Greek Epic a certain anxiety about the power of public stories to inspire further conflict, as when the Hesiodic narrator warns his brother Perses to avoid tales of conflict in the assembly, because the distraction they present may prevent him from completing the hard work required to make a living (as I argue in Christensen 2018e:31–34). While the *Odyssey*'s interest is certainly not as mundane, it shares a critical acknowledgement of the danger implicit in communal tales. Stories can bring forgetfulness, just as they can purvey the wrong kinds of lessons and examples. Language's potential to serve as discourse is balanced against poetic myth's ability to distract from troubles, to bring relief from pain, as expressed at the birth of Memory (*Mnēmosunē*) in Hesiod's *Theogony* ("a forgetfulness of evils and a respite from worries," λησμοσύνην τε κακῶν ἄμπαυμά τε μερμηράων, 55). Public speech can create truth, *alētheia*, acknowledged as such by its reception and reproduction, but it can also distract from it—in a way, to negate it by introducing *lēthe*, the force of forgetting.[63] The impact of narrative's potential to do one or the other is further complicated by trauma: traumatic experiences often encode maladaptive memories and behaviors deeply and trigger cycles of destruction and failure. A narrative intervention can function to treat this, but the results directly impact the shaping of identity.[64]

From this perspective, the point of the *Odyssey*'s final amnesty might not be for the Ithacans to forget the tale, but that they stop telling it, stop recalling it for others, lest they, like Eupeithes, become locked into a series of actions that can only result in more violence and death. The amnesty is thus not a destruction of memory but an instruction on how to use it, positing first and foremost that some stories are not useful, or plainly too dangerous, to tell. It is a method by which the people might escape their trauma. Zeus's injunction is thus one to foster a shared memory (an "anti-truth") that makes peace and wealth a sufficient end, rather than one that makes the generation of *kleos* paramount, regardless of the cost.

Different attitudes toward amnesty and silence in the modern world help reframe what ancient amnesties mean and how the fictive amnesty of the *Odyssey* differs. In modern international legal theory, amnesty is not about forgetting primarily, but instead about immunity from penalties and prosecution—it is specifically aimed at resolving cycles of retributive justice. And because of this forgiving without forgetting, amnesties can

present real challenges to short- and medium-term constitutionality and stability (Freeman and Pensky 2012). Modern theorizing sometimes sees amnesty as part of what is called transitional justice; it is a step but not an end. And where the step functions is at times tied to the type of polity. For example, in Argentina in the 1980s, the military government declared an amnesty for its own actions. After that government failed to maintain civil and economic stability, a new elected government overturned the self-amnesty declaration and put the military on trial for human rights violations. This led to an impasse and a decade of struggles involving international human rights activists, several judicial rulings, and successive organizations leading to prosecutions in the late 2000's (Engstrom and Peirera 2012). Efforts to uncover past actions in Brazil, on the other hand, have tried to balance truth and political stability: truth commissions there represent the belief that "the disclosure of the past and the processing of crimes represent a commitment to nonrepetition." When combined with selective trials for the worst crimes, such balancing "deepens democracy and respect for human rights" (Abrâo and Torelly 2012:178). Similar are attempts like those of the Truth and Justice Committee in South Africa, which has attempted to channel narrative itself as a retributive force. Such interventions, however, have uneven purchase on success. Upheaval in Rwanda and Uganda, for example, has shown that transitional justice "follow[s]—rather than shape[s]—political circumstances" (Clark 2012:236). Amnesty is politically expedient at some times and not at others.

Although ancient notions of democracy and human rights are sometimes dramatically different from our own, the range of responses to amnesty in the Classical period of ancient Greek echoes some of these modern concerns. First, we must note that the classical injunction *mē mnēsikakein* differs from Zeus's *eklēsis*. The former, as is clear from Andokides's quotation, is a promise not to prosecute or seek penalties; the latter is a fantasy of being able to hit a reset button. But such a promise, as is clear from Thucydides's description of civil strife in Megara, this works only as far as people observe the oath (4.74):

> καὶ ὕστερον ὁ μὲν διαλυθέντων τῶν ξυμμάχων κατὰ πόλεις ἐπανελθὼν καὶ αὐτὸς ἐς τὴν Κόρινθον τὴν ἐπὶ Θρᾴκης στρατείαν παρεσκεύαζεν, ἵνα περ καὶ τὸ πρῶτον ὥρμητο: οἱ δὲ ἐν τῇ πόλει Μεγαρῆς, ἀποχωρησάντων καὶ τῶν Ἀθηναίων ἐπ᾽ οἴκου, ὅσοι μὲν τῶν πραγμάτων πρὸς τοὺς Ἀθηναίους μάλιστα μετέσχον, εἰδότες ὅτι ὤφθησαν εὐθὺς ὑπεξῆλθον, οἱ δὲ ἄλλοι κοινολογησάμενοι τοῖς τῶν φευγόντων φίλοις κατάγουσι τοὺς ἐκ Πηγῶν, ὁρκώσαντες πίστεσι μεγάλαις μηδὲν μνησικακήσειν, βουλεύσειν

δὲ τῇ πόλει τὰ ἄριστα. οἱ δὲ ἐπειδὴ ἐν ταῖς ἀρχαῖς ἐγένοντο καὶ ἐξέτασιν ὅπλων ἐποιήσαντο, διαστήσαντες τοὺς λόχους ἐξελέξαντο τῶν τε ἐχθρῶν καὶ οἳ ἐδόκουν μάλιστα ξυμπρᾶξαι τὰ πρὸς τοὺς Ἀθηναίους ἄνδρας ὡς ἑκατόν, καὶ τούτων πέρι ἀναγκάσαντες τὸν δῆμον ψῆφον φανερὰν διενεγκεῖν, ὡς κατεγνώσθησαν, ἔκτειναν, καὶ ἐς ὀλιγαρχίαν τὰ μάλιστα κατέστησαν τὴν πόλιν. [4] καὶ πλεῖστον δὴ χρόνον αὕτη ὑπ᾽ ἐλαχίστων γενομένη ἐκ στάσεως μετάστασις ξυνέμεινεν.

Later, when the allies were released to their cities, [Brasidas] also returned and went to Corinth where he was preparing an attack on Thrace, the very place where he was heading first. After the Athenians returned home, those in the city from Megara–however many were especially involved with matters pertaining to the Athenians–departed immediately because they knew they had been discovered. The rest conversed with the friends of exiles and brought back those from Pegae after they made them swear great oaths that they would take no action on previous actions [*mnēsikakēsein*] but would instead consider what was best for the city.

But, when they took up office and made a review of the hoplites, they separated the units and chose around one hundred of their enemies and those who seemed to be most implicated in overtures to the Athenians and they forced the people to vote openly about them, killed them and established a narrow oligarchy in the city. This change, even though it was achieved by the smallest number during the civil strife, lasted the longest amount of time.

This passage bears considerable similarity in the phrasing to the oath preserved by Andokides cited above. In these conditions, the amnesty exists in a tenuous and limited state. The legal oath not to "remember evils" does not wipe out the individual memory, the persistent grudge. So, when the boundaries between public and private are once again blurred, the grudge held in private is pursued in public. Consider as well Aeschines' use of these themes during his political contests with Demosthenes (3.203):

Indeed, whenever he says these sorts of things against arguments for specific factions, propose this in return: "Demosthenes, if the people who restored the democracy in exile from Phyle were similar to you, the democracy would never have been re-established. But now they saved the city from great calamities and uttered that finest speech of a cultured mind: "*Don't hold a grudge*" [mnēsikakein]" *But you rip open wounds: today's speech matters more to you than the safety of the state*.

ὅταν δὴ τὰ τοιαῦτα λέγῃ, πρὸς μὲν τοὺς στασιαστικοὺς λόγους ἐκεῖνο

> αὐτῷ ὑποβάλλετε: ‘ὦ Δημόσθενες, εἰ ὅμοιοι ἦσαν σοὶ οἱ ἀπὸ Φυλῆς φεύγοντα τὸν δῆμον καταγαγόντες, οὐκ ἄν ποθ᾽ ἡ δημοκρατία κατέστη. νῦν δὲ ἐκεῖνοι μὲν μεγάλων κακῶν συμβάντων ἔσωσαν τὴν πόλιν τὸ κάλλιστον ἐκ παιδείας ῥῆμα φθεγξάμενοι, ‘μὴ μνησικακεῖν’: σὺ δὲ ἑλκοποιεῖς, καὶ μᾶλλόν σοι μέλει τῶν αὐθημερὸν λόγων, ἢ τῆς σωτηρίας τῆς πόλεως.

Aeschines emphasizes that the choice not to remember is one to preserve the stability and the coherency of the state above and beyond personal interest.[65] Both Aeschines and Thucydides emphasize *not* pursuing private grudges as a necessary component of maintaining the public. Aeschines particularly positions the oath of not holding grudges (*to mē mnēsikakein*) as a mark of Athenian wisdom, because it allowed for the reestablishment of democracy and order (2.176) and accuses Demosthenes elsewhere (3.208) of ignoring this principle and "reopening wounds" (σὺ δὲ ἑλκοποιεῖς) because he does not care about the safety of the state (τῆς σωτηρίας τῆς πόλεως). So not *remembering evil* is, in part, about ensuring social stability. It is about abandoning a collective principle of correspondence of facts to memory in favor of coherence of identity and shared narrative. And there is a darker side of this too. As emerges in the speeches of Aeschines, such silencing of the personal becomes a type of ideology. Asserting the suppression of individual suffering as a virtue for supporting public stability becomes a rhetorical cudgel to fend off dissent.

In this exploration of the capacity for collective memory to impact social stability, the epic anticipates its own use as a cultural narrative, as a form of discourse, and the manner in which later Athenians use myth, especially in tragedy, as a form of civic or social memory.[66] Just to clarify: the epic shows a dissolute and fractious body-politic in Ithaca, resulting in part from a lack of institutions and clear boundaries between public and private life and a breakdown in behavioral restraint due to a collective trauma. It dramatizes the effects of such instability through the slaughter of the suitors, which, though traditional, acquires new valence through the individualization of the group's members and the claims articulated and partially valorized by their families. The solution, the *eklēsis*, is shorthand for the creation of an authoritative group narrative. In essence, the epic prescribes the generation of a specific *new* narrative as a treatment for the trauma of Ithaca's various groups. If, as many would argue, the *Odyssey* is ideologically inclined in favor of a single leader against corrupt oligarchs, the amnesty at the very least clearly indicates the cost of welcoming the king's return or embracing a new tyrant: the sublimation of personal

claims to vengeance and perhaps even the surrender of individual fame.

Let's consider again the depiction of Ithaca as one of a people traumatized. One of the themes of the epic is the relationship between vengeance and justice. In the absence of a deity to mark an act as just, the issue is often one of perspective. In discussing the thoroughly disarming observations made by Thucydides in his description of civil war, Peter Ahrensdorf emphasizes that in times of civil war "human hopes, especially for immortality, tend to overwhelm human fears, even of violent death" (2000:579). It changes the threshold of expectation the way that epic tales of vengeance set a horizon of expectation for proper behavior and consequences (587). In contemplating the Thucydidean claim that men "preferred to suffer injustice and then take revenge than not suffer injustice at all" (ἀντιτιμωρήσασθαί τέ τινα περὶ πλείονος ἦν ἢ αὐτὸν μὴ προπαθεῖν), he explains that "the passion for vengeance is, *from the viewpoint of one who seeks vengeance*, a passion for justice, since it necessarily entails seeking to punish what is thought to be previous injustice."[67] There is something seductive about being right; it is even sweeter to be right in righteous anger at having been wronged.

One could argue then that epic itself, with its promise of fame for certain deeds, creates a perverse incentive to pursue vengeance and, as with the *Odyssey*, a cultural frame that values self-righteous victimhood. And, as Martha Nussbaum has recently explored, payback is deeply-seated in human emotions of anger and reinscribed in political systems.[68] Even though Odysseus notes that he might suffer payback for exacting vengeance, his epic attenuates this by conferring glory upon him for suffering and winning payback. As Ahrensdorf argues when considering Greek amnesty (2000:590), the only solution is to render the injustice forgotten and erase the possibility of becoming a righteously aggrieved party. Amnesty eliminates perverse incentives that drive the competition for remembrance and vengeance.

If this formulation works for the epic tradition, the *eklēsis* is not just an appropriate end to the poem, but the only possible one. The solution is not that we will no longer speak of its events or that the suitors' families will forget the loss of their sons and brothers, but instead that they, and we, may no longer use their response as a model for that kind of tale. Instead, we receive a new model and a new lesson: the necessity of selecting and directing our communal story.

In this chapter, I have re-examined the political life of Ithaca and considered the psychological state of its people as a way to show how Homeric epic is sensitive to human minds on a grand scale, as well as a small one. By proposing that the people of Ithaca are traumatized by their experiences and the discourse of heroism and fame reflected by the epic tradition itself, I have continued the exploration of the epic's status as a type of discourse and as an investigation of the problematic status of cultural discourse. Through this process, I have taken a different route to a common explanation for the epic's sudden and surprising ending—that, like other Greek myths (e.g., the story of the *Oresteia*), it emphasizes the danger of a vengeance narrative and experiments with different ways of foregrounding communal good over that of an individual or family. In making these arguments, I have also shown that the epic is sensitive to communal psychology as well as that of individuals. In both its presentation of the competing political claims on Ithaca and its exploration of possible solutions, the epic dramatizes the way that stories shape and inform communities in salutary and damaging ways. Epic also demonstrates a further understanding of folk psychology by enjoining its audiences to engage in contemplation of the paradigmatic problems that necessitate the *eklēsis* at its end. This step both indicates that the *Odyssey* presents the paradigm of vengeance as psychologically damaging and also implies that complex communal narratives, which prompt contemplation of damaging narratives, are a possible countermeasure.

This solution, however, is only partial—it does not consider an overlapping series of problems that attend the epic's closure in Book 24 and it does not consider either the psychological effect of closure and resolution on the individual most at the center of this tale. In the next chapter, I will move back from the communal and the political to consider the impact of the epic's ending on an individual mind.

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1 Eius poesim totam esse doctrinam vivendi quidam ostendunt, *de Studiis et Litteris* 21.

2 For epic and social memory, see the Introduction.

3 Alexander et. al (2004:10–11) emphasize that traumatic experiences are not simply disruptions in communal life or failures of institutions, but they are "social crises which becoming cultural crises," meaning that events and collective pain are "communicated as a threat to who people are."

4 This process of making claims that redefine communal relationships is essentially one definition of "experiencing trauma," which "can be understood as a sociological process that defines a painful injury to the collectivity, establishes the victim, attributes responsibility, and distributes the ideal and material consequences" (Alexander et al. 2004:11).

5 Rose 2012:132: "The most significant political phenomenon of the period is that the

institution of monarchy was in the process of being displaced by oligarchy, collectively exercised control by heads of the large estates"; cf. Rose 1975:141 Rose 2012:136: suitors may have been faceless, traditionally; cf. Whitman 1958:306–8, who also sees "artistic failure in the violence of the final slaughter"; cf. Finley 1954:119.

6 For the aporetic end of the epic, see the next chapter. In this I have been influenced by the work of Laura Candiotto on Socratic *aporia* (2015:242). She argues that the process of dialectic is "we-reasoning" and is a type of intersubjectivity. See, in addition, the Introduction.

7 See above and Alexander et al.:2004.

8 See Hammer 2002; Donlan 1979; Barker 2009; Elmer 2013; and Christensen 2015 for Homeric politics. For the political situation in Ithaca as being basically the same as that of Skheria, see Olson 1995:184–204.

9 For example, Skheria in the *Odyssey* bears a close resemblance to *poleis* of Homer's time, especially Old Smyrna and Oikonomos (Scully 1990:87), but institutionally, the polis on Ithaca appears insignificant (Scully 1990:102) and the *oikos* is preeminent.

10 οὔτε ποθ' ἡμετέρη ἀγορὴ γένετ' οὔτε θόωκος / ἐξ οὗ Ὀδυσσεὺς δῖος ἔβη κοίλῃσ' ἐνὶ νηυσί.

11 For this scene, see Barker and Christensen 2019:190–2. For the Hesiodic character of Nestor, see Martin 1989:81; Dickson 1995; Mackie 1996:132.

12 "Then, once I formed the assembly, I spoke among them" (καὶ τότ' ἐγὼν ἀγορὴν θέμενος μετὰ πᾶσιν ἔειπον·): Polyphemos's island, *Od*. 9.171; Kirkē's island, 10.187; Thrinakia, 12.319.

13 Thrinakia, 12.339: "Eurylokhos began the wicked council among the companions," Εὐρύλοχος δ' ἑτάροισι κακῆς ἐξήρχετο βουλῆς; 12.352: "So Eurylokhos spoke, and the rest of the companions were assenting to him," ὣς ἔφατ' Εὐρύλοχος, ἐπὶ δ; ᾔνεον ἄλλοι ἑταῖροι.

14 See Whitman 1958:308; Heubeck, West, and Hainsworth (1988:26–27) note that the absence of any assembly on Ithaca for twenty years means that the poet of the *Odyssey* did not consider such institutions central to Ithacan life; cf. Sale 1994:19: "the *polis* is relatively insignificant"; Barker (2009:93) for how the assemblies in Book 2 "expose the inadequacy of formal debate"; and Scully 1990:101 and 196–96 for a bibliography.

15 Laertes may be an example of elderly kings retiring, see Calhoun 1962:31; for problems of succession, see Silvermintz 2004:31n. 18; cf. Starr 1961 for historical parallels.

16 As Benardete (1996:8–9) observes, Odysseus left no clear provision for governance. Halverson (1986) emphasizes that in this period there is no state without a king.

17 See, e.g., Sale 1994:13 and 91–94; Elmer 2013:24; for bibliography, see Christensen 2015:26 n. 4.

18 As discussed below, Laertes is mentioned as having conquered a citadel on the island. Later traditions record a city name for Ithaka, Alalkomenai; see Plutarch, *Greek Questions* 301d.

19 See, again Sale 1994:18.

20 Schol ad. *Od*. 14.397 Δουλίχιον] πόλις τῆς Κεφαλληνίας. V. εἰς Κεφαλληνίαν.

21 Schol A. ad *Od*. 24.376–78 and Schol. bT to the same passage place Kephallania as one of the Islands and a Kephalos as a forebear of Laertes.

22 For a discussion of the geography, see Strabo 10.2.14–15.

23 "Tell me of the father and son I left behind, does my *geras* still belong to them or does some other man already have it because they think I will not come home?" εἰπὲ δέ μοι πατρός τε καὶ υἱέος, ὃν κατέλειπον / ἢ ἔτι πὰρ κείνοισιν ἐμὸν γέρας, ἦέ τις ἤδη / ἀνδρῶν ἄλλος ἔχει, ἐμὲ δ' οὐκέτι φασὶ νέεσθαι.

24 When Eurymakhos speaks about Antinoos, he characterizes him as looking for the marriage (with Penelope) and "other things" in order to be king of Ithaca (22.49–53). On the meaning of *geras* in the *Iliad* as "an honorific portion," see Nagy 1999:132 (with notes) and as "a token of social esteem," see Muellner 1996:103–6; cf. Elmer 2013:70.

25 See Rose (1975:138) on the inheritability of the kingship: the education of Telemachus is "dictated first and foremost by the poet's sense of the actual fragility of the institution."

26 On definitions of *basileus* and *anax*, see Drews 1983, passim but especially 102–3, where he focuses on titles for Agamemnon. As a Mycenaean term for a religious and military figure, the title *wanax* may have special association with begetting and engendering: see Palaima 2006:53; Watkins 1995:8.

27 Ancient commentators counted the suitors as among the aristocracy of the four major islands listed above (and number them at 108). In particular, though, the scholia (HQMR ad *Od*. 2.51) claim that Telemachus is trying to make the issue personal rather than political by picking out a few of the suitors as leaders.

28 On blame and scapegoating as being symptomatic of cultural trauma, see Smelser 2004:52–53.

29 Nagler 1990: "to be a suitor is to be on strike, that is, to opt out of the system, to feed on it parasitically."

30 αὐτοὶ δ' εἰς ἀγορὴν κίον ἀθρόοι, οὐδέ τιν' ἄλλον / εἴων οὔτε νέων μεταΐζειν οὔτε γερόντων.

31 For the companions and the suitors as representing the *laoi* in the *Odyssey*, see Haubold 2000:101–2.

32 For the psychological importance of a sense of belonging in education and development, see Bruner 1986:127.

33 Collective behavior can yield transgressive outcomes. Some have shown that these results are actually reached through an aggregation of individual decisions, as illustrated by the work of Grenovetter (see especially 1978:1441). Malcolm Gladwell (2015) has adapted these models to argue that "thresholds" for certain types of behavior can be lowered merely by the existence of a precedent for such behavior.

34 See, e.g., Smelser 2004:43–45.

35 On the anxiety caused by misfiring of this instinct, see Chapter 3.

36 For the marking of *nemesis* by Homeric speakers as denoting shame and righteous anger, see Scott 1980; Janko 1992:159; Ebbot 1999; Cairns 2001; Barker and Christensen 2006; and Scodel 2008:19–20.

37 See Rose 2012; cf. Silvermintz 2004:38 and Haubold 2000:110–11 and 114–15 for a discussion of the relationship between the *laoi* and the suitors.

38 For epic as a form of social memory, see the Introduction.

39 Redfield (2003:72–81) argues that the *homophrosunē* prized for marriage in the *Odyssey*

(6.180-85) is a type of social mediation.

40 As with the end of vendetta in the Orestes cycle, the *Odyssey* may point to a promise of resolution outside of its narrative (in this case, perhaps Athens). For a potentially similar resolution of vendetta in Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, see Nagy 2013, 491-496. For lack of resolution and the importance of the *Odyssey* as a source of knowledge, see Buchan 2004.

41 For these passages, see Loney 2019:128.

42 For the potential of the deaths of the suitors causing an endless cycle of "reciprocal violence," see Marks 2008:69–70. On payoff vs. payback in Homeric poetry, cf. Wilson 2002:89–96.

43 Cf. Chapter 6.

44 For Odysseus's expectation of violent reprisals, see Marks 2008:72–74, Russo, Fernandez-Galiano, and Heubeck 1992:405; and Loney 2019:213–15.

45 For de Jong (2001:583) the assembly corresponds structurally to 2.1–259; cf. Russo, Fernandez-Galiano and Heubeck 1992:405. On the impossible situation faced by the trial, see Marks 2008:68-71. Louden (2011:304) sees Eupeithes's speech as containing specious logic.

46 On Eupeithes's speech, see Marks 2008:68–70; Bakker 2013:130. For the deaths of the suitors potentially causing an endless cycle of "reciprocal violence," see Marks 2008:69–70.

47 For this diction as enacting a theme of vendetta, see Nagy 1999 [1979], 95.

48 See Chapter 9.

49 For Homeric composition and formulae, see the Introduction and Chapter 3.

50 On Eupeithes's criticism of Odysseus, see Nagler 1990:346–47. The phrase "destroyed the host" is marked in the Homeric tradition; see Haubold (2000:108–11) for a discussion of this passage and a bibliography. For Eupeithes' words on Odysseus' killing of his people in war and at home as counterbalancing the proem, see Buchan 2004:3-4.

51 Ascription of a great deed often indicates negative judgment: cf. Nestor's description of Aigisthos (... μάλα γὰρ μέγα μήσατο ἔργον, 3.261); Odysseus of Epikastē (ἢ μέγα ἔργον ἔρεξεν ἀϊδρείῃσι νόοιο, 11.272) and his companions (οἱ δ' ἕταροι μέγα ἔργον ἐμητίσαντο μένοντες, 12.373); Melanthō, by Penelope (ἔρδουσα μέγα ἔργον, ὃ σῇ κεφαλῇ ἀναμάξεις, 19.92); Melanthios, by narrator (or self?) (... μέγα δ' αὐτῷ φαίνετο ἔργον, 22.149); Telemachus, by suitors (4.663 =16.346); Suitors, by Halithersēs (οἳ μέγα ἔργον ἔρεζον ἀτασθαλίῃσι κακῇσι, 24.458). One exception is Eurykleia's triumphant mention of the murder of the suitors (ἴθυσέν ῥ' ὀλολύξαι, ἐπεὶ μέγα εἴσιδεν ἔργον, 22.408); for a discussion of Eurykleia's evaluation, see Loney 2015 passim; for this theme in general, see Barker and Christensen 2008.

52 Haubold 2000:108: Eupeithes announces that Odysseus has destroyed his people.

53 Here I am influenced by the recent analysis of the impulse to payback as a type of anger, which is destructive rather than constructive, by Nussbaum 2016 (see especially chapter 1).

54 Russo, Fernandez-Galiano, and Heubeck 1992:412: "This plan is of the greatest importance in the history of ideas: it means nothing less than the abolition of the blood-feud, which had hitherto prevailed without qualification; in its place is established a new political order based on justice and law, and validated by the gods, in which a just and benevolent king ensures wealth and freedom ... The poet here is the advocate and herald of a new age."

55 Some have viewed the slaughter at the end of the *Odyssey* using ideas framed by René Girard whose cross-cultural work emphasizes the reciprocal nature of violence and the manner in which violence is integrated into the state through sacrificial killing (see especially 1977:266281). In this pattern, the sacrificer is not free of pollution; the instrument of divine wrath is still in a "dangerous position" (Nagler 1990:341); cf. also Seaford 1994, who applies this theoretical framework to the Cylon conspiracy in ancient Athens.

56 See, e.g., Seaford 1994 for the Homeric epics as emphasizing reciprocal exchange in depicting the state as a family or household.

57 As Agamben (2015:10) argues *stasis* is a war within the family.

58 Agamben 2016:16: "The *stasis* ... takes place neither in the *oikos* nor in the *polis*, neither in the family nor in the city; rather, it constitutes a zone of indifference between the unpolitical space of the family and the political space of the city. In transgressing the threshold, the *oikos* is politicized; conversely, the *polis* is 'economised,' that is, it is reduced to an *oikos*. This means that in the system of Greek politics civil war functions as a threshold of politicisation and depoliticisation, through which the house is exceeded in the city and the city is depoliticized in the family."

59 Haubold 2000:127: Odysseus and the *laoi* cannot easily co-exist. *Kleos* itself is posed as a competitive object with its own dangerous economy. In Greek poetic culture, we have Hesiod's poetry competition (*WD* 650–59), the tradition of the *Certamen of Homer and Hesiod*, and many more examples; see Collins 2004 and Griffith 1990. For competition as a hallmark of Greek poetic culture, see also Barker and Christensen 2019, chap. 1. For the connection between this competitive aesthetic and epic themes of *eris*, see Christensen 2018e.

60 For recent comments on this amnesty, see Ober 2005, especially 172, where he characterizes the amnesty as an atypical "halting[ing] of the cycle of retribution." See Cook 1995 passim for the intimate connection between our *Odyssey* and historical Athens.

61 Agamben 2015:21: "*Mnēsikakein* means less 'to have bad memories' than 'to do harm with memory, to make bad use of memories' ... The Athenian *amnestia* is not simply a forgetting or a repression of the past; it is an exhortation not to make bad use of memory."

62 See Loraux 2006:149: the prohibition is "a way of proclaiming that there is a statute of limitations for seditious acts."

63 On this famous tension and the accordance of *lies* as the opposite of *truth*, see González 2015:233–66.

64 In a modern parallel to the power of poetry to distract, there are modern drugs that impede the encoding of traumatic memories like propranolol; see Morris 2015:220–21.

65 Consider, as well, Aeschines' similar comments at 2.176, where he argues pointedly that "democracy is preserved by peace; they struggle to find wars which bring about democracy's end." ἐξ ἧς ἡ δημοκρατία σῴζεται, συναγωνιζόμενοι δὲ τοῖς πολέμοις, ἐξ ὧν ὁ δῆμος καταλύεται.

66 Loraux 2006:148: " ... Athens commits itself to a well-monitored practice of civic memory." See Steinbock 2013:7: "Social or collective memory ... is a powerful force in every community, since it creates collective identity by giving individuals a shared image of their past, providing them with an explanation of the present and a vision of the future"; cf. Steinbock 2013:27: Myths "fulfill the same social function as collective memories of historical events."

67 The whole passage provides important reflections on the creation of a commonwealth and its fragile bonds: 3.82.7–8: "To exact vengeance from someone was thought to be more important than not suffering at all. If oaths were ever taken in turn, they were strong because each person was at a loss and had no power at all. But as soon as one of them had the advantage, he attacked if he saw anyone unguarded: it was sweeter to take vengeance despite a pledge than to do so openly ... To blame for all of these things is the love of power and a love of honor. From both, they fell into a voluntary love of conflict. For those who were in charge of the state each claimed identities for themselves, some the equal rights of the masses, the others the wisdom of the aristocrats; while guarding the common goods in word, they were making them the contest's prize, competing with one another to be pre-eminent, they dared the most terrible things—and they surpassed them with greater acts of vengeance too."

68 Nussbaum 2016; see especially the conclusion, where she writes "it seems simply inexcusable to tolerate and even encourage political and legal institutions that embrace and valorize the stupidity of the retributive spirit" (249).

9

THE THERAPY OF OBLIVION, UNFORGETTABLE PAIN, AND THE *ODYSSEY*'S END

ἐν μὲν οὖν τοῖς δραμασιν τὰ ἐπεισόδια σύντομα, ἡ δ' ἐποποιία τούτοις μηκύνεται. τῆς γὰρ Ὀδυσσείας οὐ μακρὸς ὁ λόγος ἐστίν· ἀποδημοῦντός τινος ἔτη πολλὰ καὶ παραφυλαττομένου ὑπὸ τοῦ Ποσειδῶνος καὶ μόνου ὄντος, ἔτι δὲ τῶν οἴκοι οὕτως ἐχόντων ὥστε τὰ χρήματα ὑπὸ μνηστήρων ἀναλίσκεσθαι καὶ τὸν υἱὸν ἐπιβουλεύεσθαι, αὐτὸς δὲ ἀφικνεῖται χειμασθείς, καὶ ἀναγνωρίσας τινὰς ἐπιθέμενος αὐτὸς μὲν ἐσώθη τοὺς δ' ἐχθροὺς διέφθειρε. τὸ μὲν οὖν ἴδιον τοῦτο, τὰ δ' ἄλλα ἐπεισόδια.

In drama, the episodes are brief; while epic uses episodes for expansion. The story of the *Odyssey* really is not long: a man is away from home for many years because he is detained by Poseidon and he is alone. While this is going on, at home his possessions are being wasted by suitors and there is a plot against his son. But when he returns, storm-tossed, once he reveals himself, he attacks them, saves himself and destroys his enemies. That's the core of the tale; different episodes comprise the rest of it.

Aristotle, *Poetics* 1455b17–24

What you remember saves you.

W. S. Merwin

In the assembly of Book 24 (412–71), the Ithacans act in part as a mirror for the audience: in splitting their vote on whether or not to pursue vengeance on Odysseus and his family, the epic's participants concede that any resolution will be somewhat unsatisfactory. The political amnesia, as I argued in the last chapter, is an indication both of the impossibility of ever effecting a resolution acceptable to all parties and

also a reflection of the type of strategies required to keep a community at peace. The epic explores the political challenges of a traumatized people through the disjuncture in Ithacan responses—the sudden end is myth's dramatization of the recursive nature of vengeance narratives. As discussed previously, René Girard (1977) has explored the integration of violence into a state through sacrifice and religion. As a reflex of this cross-cultural pattern, the end of the *Odyssey* might be seen as the institutionalization of some kind of ritual, with Odysseus positioned as the instrument of divine justice, the "sacred king [who] is also a monster" (Girard 1977:266). Indeed, divine fiat is *the* mythological resolution to the cycle of reciprocal violence and, as Michael Nagler has noted, symbolic representations of violence can help to prepare audiences to respond to actual violence (1990:356). The impossibility of satisfying vengeance in real life, in fact, helps in part to provide etiologies for human institutions. Thus, our *Odyssey*'s resolution encourages audiences to see that bringing an *end* to the political problem of Ithaca requires an evaluation of what it means to create a community and to consider communal good.

These answers, however, are publicly focused explanations for the necessity of the epic's abrupt closure. Both the amnesty and its antecedent crisis in the assembly are also indicative of the epic's self-conscious treatment of the theme of endings. A full reckoning of how the *Odyssey* engages with folk psychology should also acknowledge that it explores essential aspects of human cognition in searching for an end to its story. And there are many other signs of the psychological tensions in closure before the *eklēsis* itself.

In the introduction, I explored several different theoretical frameworks for how one can call the *Odyssey* psychological and the relationship between the narrative and the formation of identities within the epic and without. In later chapters, I argued that the epic dramatizes the development of Telemachus's mind and the importance of social and cognitive communities. Then it proceeds to show both father and son coping with a sense of defeatism in a way that is analogous to modern theories of Learned Helplessness and proposes varies responses to this: a type of extinction theory through action and the rebuilding of identity through the telling of tales. All throughout these discussions, the implicit argument has been that these psychological dramatizations impact the epic's audiences by echoing their own experiences and modelling their various responses. If this were the only manner in which the *Odyssey* performed its psychological function, it would already be sophisticated and powerful. But the epic could still fall dangerously into paradigmatic

and reductive modes of thinking, leaving itself open to simplistic and reductive receptions.

The theme of *endings*, as this chapter explores, is crucial to the epic's final book and not merely in a meta-narrative way—appreciating how deeply the epic is invested in making its audiences think about how stories end can provide us with a deeper understanding of why the epic ends as it does, while also speaking directly to the *Odyssey*'s status as a poem of life and living. The question of how to end the tale interweaves the dangers of storytelling, the perils of paradigmatic thinking, and the lives that are lived through and outside the poem. And this question is actually posed throughout the poem, as we see audiences troubled by narrative (in)completion and interpreting the stories it presents. In this way, the epic's exploration of how to end a tale is, in part, about human cognitive and emotional experience, both the pleasure of knowing a tale's end and the wrenching pain of not yet knowing its conclusion. But it is also a necessary continuation of and commentary on the thematics of narrative power explored in Odysseus's deployment of tales in his *Apologoi* and his later lies. How to end a story demands an understanding of what stories do in the world that receives them and what limits are imposed by the narratives that preceded them and the audiences they shape.

Before I pursue some of these thematic reflections on narrative, I will first provide an overview of the contents of Book 24.[1] I will organize the subsequent discussion around three narrative signs of closure that emerge most clearly in Book 24, highlighting first the epic's economy of narrative pleasure and pain to help explain the way Eupeithes's unforgettable grief forces him to consider revenge the only possible paradigmatic response to his suffering. Then I will explore how the underworld scenes at the beginning of the book help to reinforce the cyclic nature of the stories we know and the interpretations we impose on the world. To help us understand closure better from emotional and cognitive perspectives, I will also introduce some interdisciplinary frameworks to help explain our need to bring stories to their end. Together, these treatments combine with other signs of closure so as (1) to magnify the importance of Odysseus's (incomplete) tale; (2) to advance the epic's interest in probing the dangers of poetry and narrative; and (3) to anticipate its own problematic closure, the open-endedness of Odysseus's tale, and the lives that must be lived after epic ends.

A. The End of the *Odyssey*

The *Odyssey*'s ending has prompted many objections in the history of its interpretation. These objections remain useful indicators of the poem's challenging turns and its audiences' desire to reduce its complexity, rather than cope with its challenges. Hellenistic scholars, for example, assert thematic resolution when Penelope and Odysseus reunite in bed (23.293–96). Although our details are a little unclear as to whether Hellenistic editors believed that the lovemaking constituted either a *goal* (*télos*) of the *Odyssey*'s narrative or an actual end point (*télos* or *péras*), the record bequeathed to us shows little interest in the events of Book 24.[2] Even Aristotle—in the epigraph to this chapter—saw the *telos* or completion of the *Odyssey*'s plot as coming with the payback of the suitors in Book 23.[3] There were dissenting voices: the Byzantine Archbishop and scholar Eustathius complained that such ideas "cut off critical parts of the *Odyssey*, such as the reunion of Odysseus and Laertes and many other amazing things."[4] In the past, Analytic scholars eagerly followed the judgments of Aristarchus, the Alexandrian editor, and Aristotle, in trying to find the real ending to the *Odyssey*.[5] More recent trends, however, offer thematic arguments, emphasizing the importance of each part of the epic's final book.[6] Studies from the point of view of oral poetry suggest that Greek epic poems in performance often made transitions from one narrative into another, leaving us with a type of closure that only seems anticlimactic.[7] And, although Book 24 is now largely accepted as essential to the whole, it still strikes some scholars as awkward or in some way aesthetically lacking.[8]

A first task is to understand the components and potential effects of the epic's final book.[9]

Table 9.1. Outline of the events of *Odyssey* 24

1–204: Second Underworld Scene	The suitors' ghosts descend to Hades; Achilles and Agamemnon have a conversation; Amphimedon recaps the action
204–411: Reunion of Odysseus and Laertes	Odysseus tests his father, then relents; they gather with others and dine
412–71: The Trial of Odysseus	The families of the slain gather their dead; assemble; split over whether to face Odysseus; prepare for war
472–88: Divine Council	Athena and Zeus discuss how to end the conflict
489–545: The Battle	The suitors' families approach; Odysseus and his household arm; Laertes kill one man (Eupeithes); Athena intervenes

Book 24 starts with a new scene: Hermes guides the souls of the dead suitors to Hades, where Agamemnon and Achilles converse and a suitor provides a recapitulation of the slaughter.[10] Then, Odysseus goes to the countryside, where he lies to his father, ends up giving up on his lies when Laertes weeps, and they share a meal with others.[11] While they are eating, the families of the suitors assemble and debate whether they should just bury their dead or seek their own vengeance from Odysseus. As discussed in the last chapter, the Ithacans split, with some undefined portion deciding to arm to face Odysseus.[12] Before the clash, the narrative moves to Olympos, where Athena and Zeus debate what to do, deciding to make the families forget the deaths of the suitors, swear oaths to Odysseus, and all live together again.[13] Before we get this happily-ever-after, however, Eupeithes, a father of one of the suitors, is killed. Athena intervenes as a *dea ex machina*.[14]

There are good reasons why many have found this sequence of events troubling.[15] How does a second Underworld narrative contribute to the epic as a whole? Why does Odysseus find it necessary to test his father? Why have the Ithacans assembled, if the gods are just going to resolve it all? And if the enduring power of epic is memory and eternal renown, what does it mean to say that, for peace to be achieved, the deeds of this epic must be forgotten?

There are many answers already available to these questions (and I anticipated some in the last chapter). Some are structural: the Underworld scene acts like a bookend with Odysseus's tale of the dead from Book 11; the Ithacan assembly scene recalls the assembly of Book 2; the council between Athena and Zeus about how to end the *Odyssey* structurally recalls two councils about how to begin it (1.44–96 and 5.4–43); the movement from conflict to peace between Odysseus's united household and the divided suitors may well mirror Book 1, where the feast belies a growing rift between suitors and Odysseus's family. Other explanations are thematic: Agamemnon and Achilles provide a last word on the world of war, and the race of heroes, now reflecting values more akin to Odysseus's home, provide a crucial opportunity to compare the deaths of these Iliadic heroes with Odysseus's survival and Klytemnestra's deeds with Penelope's. The *Odyssey*'s ending is, for these reasons, more complex, because it constitutes not merely the end of a single poem, but the end of the Trojan War narrative and the generations of heroes.[16] In what follows, we witness the final resolution of the hero and the epic realm: Odysseus gives up his characteristic deception; the families of the suitors take different stands; and the gods intervene on someone else's

behalf besides Odysseus's. Odysseus must reunite with his father to complete the family narrative and rejoin father and son in a way the *Iliad* allows only symbolically (the meeting of Achilles and Priam in Book 24); the trial of Odysseus makes us consider the complexity of the problem of vengeance and its unending cycle of violence.[17] The split decision of the Ithacan people, finally, invites us as an audience not just to consider our own solutions, but to rethink the whole epic, searching out similar tensions in meaning elsewhere.

What unites the disparate threads of the epic's end, I suggest, is a deep concern with the effects of narrative, in general, and what it means to end a story, in particular. From a perspective of plot and structure, the foregoing topics address almost every problem of the epic's final book save one: its open ending. When the poem is considered from the perspective of its end, moreover, even the plot-based and structural explanations seem less than satisfactory. The strangeness of its end can be sensed more strongly if we consider the closing of the *Iliad*. Each epic presents patterns also found in Shakespearean comedy and tragedy, but they also anticipate Aristotle's definition of the genres.[18] After Hektor has died, his story is, essentially, over. There is a nearly biological neatness to this: the end of the poem is the end of a life. Odysseus's death, though foretold in Book 11, is still many years in the future.[19] Where one poem almost ends in a wedding, the reunion between Odysseus and Penelope, the other ends with a funeral; but Book 24 sets these parallels askew.[20] Not only is there a surplus of action, but the split decision about Odysseus's guilt leaves us debating whether there could have been a different outcome. The dissonance may run deeper: important themes explored in the *Odyssey*, such as the importance of human responsibility, appear undermined by the poem's end.

Such dissonance demands the audiences' attention. In preparation for this, the epic itself not only primes us to notice audience reaction to poems, but it also emphasizes frustration with stories that have no closure at several key points. To do so, the epic deploys a pattern in pleasure and pain derived from narrative, which has direct bearing on the events in its final book. After Odysseus returns to Ithaca, the swineherd turns and exhorts his disguised guest (15.398–401):

> νῶϊ δ' ἐνὶ ϰλισίῃ πίνοντέ τε δαινυμένω τε
> ϰήδεσιν ἀλλήλων τεϱπώμεθα λευγαλέοισι
> μνωομένω· μετὰ γάϱ τε ϰαὶ ἄλγεσι τέϱπεται ἀνήϱ,
> ὅς τις δὴ μάλα πολλὰ πάθῃ ϰαὶ πόλλ' ἐπαληθῇ

"Let us take pleasure in calling to mind each other's terrible pains
while we drink and dine in my home.
For a man may even find pleasure among pains
when he has suffered many and gone through much."

Eumaios supports his injunction to indulge in memory with something of a gnomic statement or a proverb. For Greek dining talk, such a song of past suffering might actually be at home in the symposium. But there is something a bit different between this expression of the enjoyment of generic misfortune and their situation: elsewhere, audiences may derive pleasure from other people's pain. How does this impact the way we understand the *Odyssey* as a whole?

This moment is a critical step in the *Odyssey*'s contemplation of the relationship between narrative and pleasure. The poem presents something of an economy of pleasure where gods and heroes alike derive enjoyment from feasting (e.g., 1.25, 1.422, and 4.27), conversation (4.239), athletic competition (4.626 and 17.168), and sex (5.227). Kalypso and Odysseus take pleasure in sex (5.225–26). The suitors take pleasure in discus-throwing (4.624 and 17.167–69) and the sport of watching the beggar Iros fight Odysseus (18.36–39). They also are said to enjoy their food, dancing, and song together (17.604–6) and to pursue their dance, music, and song late into the night (18.304–6). Specific songs are mentioned—and they often involve Odysseus: Helen invites Telemachus and Menelaos to take pleasure in stories about Odysseus (4.238–41). The Phaeacians enjoy the story of the quarrel of Odysseus and Achilles (8.90–92, Odysseus weeps). Odysseus takes pleasure in the story of Hephaestus (8.367–69), then cries at the story of the Trojan horse (8.521–22). Odysseus, in his own account, takes a dangerous pleasure in the song of the Sirens (12.51–54). There are a few other moments to be discussed below, but the pattern explores a range of different pleasures in comparison to the pains experienced by Odysseus. It also includes moments of abstention and inversion. Telemachus, for example, resists the pleasure of staying with Menelaos indefinitely (4.494–99). Amid these moments, Menelaos is "delighting his mind with grief sometimes" (ἄλλοτε μέν τε γόῳ φρένα τέρπομαι, 4.102) and Penelope enjoys days grieving and lamenting (ἤματα μὲν γὰρ τέρπομ' ὀδυρομένη γοόωσα, 19.513). These final two examples make sense as bookends around the aforementioned examples, if we consider Eumaios's words about taking pleasure in grief more carefully. A man takes pleasure (τέρπεται) *afterwards* (μετὰ), when he has *finished wandering* (ἐπαληθῇ).[21] It is the

presence of the adverb and the aspectual distinction between the verbs of pleasure and suffering that give this passage its force and point towards a deeper reflection on the poem. At a very basic level, the *Odyssey* tells us that pleasure comes from a narrative that *is over*. Even if you have suffered, you can experience pleasure from a tale that has ended. It is no accident that in Books 1, 4, and 8 we find characters confessing to almost paralyzing grief over a tale whose end is unknown—in fact, over the unknown end of the tale that is being told. As I will emphasize shortly, this theme is not just about the experience of the *Odyssey*'s characters, but it is also about our experience of the *Odyssey* and our problematic expectations for the resolution of its plot.

B. Closures: Storytelling and Human Cognition

The *Odyssey* likely draws upon a basic emotional response to narrative completion. We experience frustration that comes from not knowing how a story ends, and this feeling can come from the suspense of real life as equally as in delay in completing fiction. In this depiction of pleasure at a narrative's ending—and the opposite when it is left open-ended—the epic reflects an understanding of human cognition and a range of beliefs present from Aristotle to modern cognitive science. As I mention in the Introduction, human cognition appears to be conditioned to expect causal sequences and to impose them on the world in interpreting events. From the beginning of our experience of the world, we internalize causality: even pre-linguistic infants come to expect outcomes (objects falling when pushed, for example) and express surprise at encountering something non-causal (Bruner 1986:18).[22] Because our minds are shaped in this way, unmotivated turns or incomplete tales cause us discomfort at conscious and subconscious levels. As Andy Clark (2015) proposes in his theory of predictive processing, our brains are constantly engaged in predicting outcomes and mapping actions based on a store of prior experiences.[23] While we share such cognitive apparatuses with other animals, Clark proposes that what makes human cognition different is our ability to shape and rely on our environments and the extended cognitive field provided by human culture and language (14–16).[24] As a result of such basic cognitive preparation, then, outcomes that defy our predictions can make us uncomfortable. This is, to simplify some, implicit in the argument of Aristotle's *Poetics* when he insists that a plot must have a beginning, middle, and end (*Poetics*, 1450b-1451a). Such imitation of events as

humans experience them conveys pleasure and is determinative in its effectiveness in bringing the audience pleasure.

While narrative logic dictates everything that begins has some kind of end, this logic emerges as a human *need* with philosophical and neurobiological motivations: not knowing how things turn out causes us existential pain. Suspense from a plot that never resolves converges closely with anxiety in life outside stories in times of urgency and distress. As Mark Turner argues, human storytelling relies on narrative sequencing whose underlying image schema is that of a journey. The before-now-after sequence reveals internalized notions of causality and a prejudice towards clear outcomes (1996:18–20). We might be tempted to describe this cognitive frame as something of a narrative causality bias.[25] Across our species, the shared experience of coming into the world through a common set of senses creates a basic narrative grammar that allows us to use and adapt stories our brains do not write as our own. The species-level advantage of this narrative capacity is enormous, but it also makes us vulnerable to narrative blips. The human tendency towards confabulation is a good illustration of this—and modern experiments can help illustrate how fundamental it is. Michael Gazzaniga and Joseph LeDoux did a series of experiments with patients who had separation between the left and right portion of the brain. In one, the speaking center of the brain, the left, was separated from the right: an image shown only to the right hemisphere could not be detected or talked about by the left. LeDoux summarizes (2005:10):

> For example, in one study we simultaneously showed the patient's left hemisphere a chicken claw and the right hemisphere a snow scene. The patient's left hand then selected a picture of a shovel. When the patient was asked why he made this choice, his left hemisphere (the speaking hemisphere) responded that it saw a chicken and you need a shovel to clean out the chicken shed. The left hemisphere thus used the information it had available to construct a reality that matched the two pieces of information available: it saw a picture of a chicken and it saw its hand selecting a shovel.

To put this in an Aristotelian frame: the subject receives images that have no actual causal connection and creates a narrative to connect them. The narrative has a beginning, middle, and end with the subject—imagined or projected—as a central player. What emerges from this experiment is a clear example of impulse, as described by Michael Turner as a tendency to transform "event-stories" (mere facts, observed) into "action stories."

Not only are our brains wired in such a way as to invent a story "rather than leave something unexplained," but the type of story we create tends to have agents and objects arranged with different levels of agency based on individual experience and cultural beliefs.[26] Our brains use our senses to gather data from the world around us, but they are economical in doing this. We are constantly filling in details that are not there and completing stories, with cause and effect assumed and beginning, middles, and ends preset, without necessarily grasping the situation fully. This is why witnesses to crimes and accidents are notoriously unreliable; this is also why we typically remember the types of things we do every day but not the details; and this is why we get so disturbed when we don't know how something ends: most of the time, our brains are picking out events as endings and reconstructing a narrative that would lead to them.

The human desire to bring a narrative to its end comes as no surprise from a literary perspective either: drawing on Freudian psychoanalysis, critics a generation ago like Peter Brooks (1992:102–3) saw the death instinct operative in both the pleasure derived from moving toward a text's end and a concomitant impulse to delay that end or to repeatedly return through the same movement. This is confirmed too by clinical psychologists who study the effect of death-anxiety on human behavior: narrative functions both to safeguard us against mortal fear and to give us meaning despite such fears.[27] Indeed, many readers have seen a tension or dialectical relationship between openness and closure as an indication of sophisticated narrative, of what some might call literature. But, as Don Fowler (1997:5) writes, "whether we look for closure or aperture *or a dialectic between* them in a text is a function of our own presuppositions, not of anything 'objective' about the text."[28]

Stories allow us to capitalize on the experience of other humans, alive or dead, and they are part of what make it possible for us to exist as groups that are not merely collocations of disconnected individuals. But, as I began to explore in Chapters 6 and 7, such a vital function also has side effects and dangers. The very pattern-recognition and application processes that enable our survival also help to create confirmation biases, prejudices, false positives, and foreclosed worldviews. Indeed, such potential narrative dysfunction motivates the *Odyssey*'s depictions of stories that cause emotional pain.

The *Odyssey* makes its final book partly about how to end a poem. But this theme itself capitalizes upon both the narrative that precedes it and an understanding of human psychology: audiences desire to know how a story ends but are troubled by the fact that it must end. Three signs of

closure that converge in Book 24 help to make a similar concern central to the *Odyssey*: first, a formulaic pattern with the evocation of "unforgettable grief" that starts in Book 1, then the repeated story of Penelope's shroud for Laertes, and finally the conversation between Achilles and Agamemnon at the beginning of Book 24.

C. Unforgettable Grief

Throughout this book I have returned to Zeus's opening comments in the *Odyssey*: "Mortals! They are always blaming the gods and saying that evil comes from us when they themselves suffer pain beyond their lot because of their own recklessness." These words offer a paradigmatic lesson, but they also may inspire a narrative response: the event of suffering initiates an action-story, a narrative attempt to relate misery to a complex web of human and divine agency. So, to return to this pattern once more, when characters feel pleasure or pain at the telling of a tale, the external audience is cued to "seek out the causes of things." But storytelling is a type of action and a part of the narrative too. How stories cause pleasure and pain can help us understand the Homeric narrative better and come to a clear understanding of its end.

Storytelling's effects are at issue early in the poem—for one, Zeus starts the epic by responding to one kind of narrative, the story of Aigisthos and Orestes, and expressing frustration at human beings failing to learn the answer to a paradigmatic question. But the emotional effects of storytelling are central to the conversation between Penelope and Telemachus in Book 1 (337–44):[29]

> Φήμιε, πολλὰ γὰϱ ἄλλα βϱοτῶν θελϰτήϱια οἶδας
> ἔϱγ' ἀνδϱῶν τε θεῶν τε, τά τε ϰλείουσιν ἀοιδοί·
> τῶν ἕν γέ σφιν ἄειδε παϱήμενος, οἱ δὲ σιωπῇ
> οἶνον πινόντων· ταύτης δ' ἀποπαύε' ἀοιδῆς
> λυγϱῆς, ἥ τέ μοι αἰὲν ἐνὶ στήθεσσι φίλον ϰῆϱ
> τείϱει, ἐπεί με μάλιστα ϰαθίϰετο πένθος ἄλαστον.
> τοίην γὰϱ ϰεφαλὴν ποθέω μεμνημένη αἰεὶ
> ἀνδϱός, τοῦ ϰλέος εὐϱὺ ϰαθ' Ἑλλάδα ϰαὶ μέσον Ἄϱγος.
>
> "Phemios, you know many other spells for mortals,
> the deeds of men and gods, the things singers make famous.
> Sit here singing one of those to them

And let them sit drinking their wine in silence.
But stop this grievous song: it wears always on the heart
in my chest and unforgettable grief [*penthos alaston*] has come over me especially.
Since I yearn for such a wonderful man as I remember
my husband whose fame [*kleos*] spreads wide through Greece and Argos."

Penelope asks for the suitors to sing a different song, because this one causes her *penthos alaston*, "ceaseless pain." Note how she limits the function of storytelling for this audience: she characterizes the song as *spells* or even *bewitchment* [θελκτήρια], entertainment. This exchange presents external audiences with a gap in the way audiences within the poem respond to the same narrative: the suitors' pleasure is Penelope's pain. This is a crucial revelation at the beginning of the epic because the same stories are shown to have different effects throughout the poem. But this also bears fruit in its psychological reflections. The cause of their different responses becomes clearer when Telemachus speaks (1.346–55):

μῆτερ ἐμή, τί τ' ἄρα φθονέεις ἐρίηρον ἀοιδὸν
τέρπειν ὅππῃ οἱ νόος ὄρνυται; οὔ νύ τ' ἀοιδοὶ
αἴτιοι, ἀλλά ποθι Ζεὺς αἴτιος, ὅς τε δίδωσιν
ἀνδράσιν ἀλφηστῆσιν ὅπως ἐθέλῃσιν ἑκάστῳ.
τούτῳ δ' οὐ νέμεσις Δαναῶν κακὸν οἶτον ἀείδειν·
τὴν γὰρ ἀοιδὴν μᾶλλον ἐπικλείουσ' ἄνθρωποι,
ἥ τις ἀϊόντεσσι νεωτάτη ἀμφιπέληται.
σοὶ δ' ἐπιτολμάτω κραδίη καὶ θυμὸς ἀκούειν·
οὐ γὰρ Ὀδυσσεὺς οἶος ἀπώλεσε νόστιμον ἦμαρ
ἐν Τροίῃ, πολλοὶ δὲ καὶ ἄλλοι φῶτες ὄλοντο.

"My mother, why do you begrudge the faithful singer
to delight wherever his mind leads him.
Singers aren't to blame but Zeus is who allots
to each of mortal men however he wishes.
There's nothing wrong with him singing the terrible fate of the Danaans,
for men celebrate more the song which comes most recently to their ears.
Let your heart and mind suffer to listen:
For Odysseus wasn't the only man who lost his homecoming day

in Troy, many other brave men died too."

Telemachus acknowledges that the story is the "terrible fate of the Danaans" but supports its telling based on two criteria: first, the most praiseworthy tale is the most recent one—and no story is more current than this.[30] And, second, the grief is not only Penelope's: other men died during the return home. The difference in the responses is easy to explain from an emotional perspective. Penelope experiences grief at the absence of her husband—and its effects—in a way Telemachus cannot because she actually remembers Odysseus. Even though Odysseus's delayed return has had a negative material impact on Telemachus, his father is still just a *story* to him. Accordingly, his reception of the tale relativizes it: Odysseus is merely one of many. But what often goes unnoticed is that Telemachus and the suitors are able to derive pleasure because they have implicitly provided a different end to the story from that assumed by Penelope. The suitors believe that Odysseus is dead; Telemachus may want to believe this too.[31]

There is additional thematic relevance beyond the divergent emotional responses of mother and son. When Telemachus makes it to Sparta from Pylos in Book 4, he meets a lugubrious Menelaos who confesses to indulging in grief frequently as he thinks back to his companions, the war, and the terrible returns home (4.100–12):

ἀλλ' ἔμπης, πάντας μὲν ὀδυϱόμενος ϰαὶ ἀχεύων,
πολλάϰις ἐν μεγάϱοισι ϰαθήμενος ἡμετέϱοισιν
ἄλλοτε μέν τε γόῳ φϱένα τέϱπομαι, ἄλλοτε δ' αὖτε
παύομαι· αἰψηϱὸς δὲ ϰόϱος ϰϱυεϱοῖο γόοιο· —
τῶν πάντων οὐ τόσσον ὀδύϱομαι, ἀχνύμενός πεϱ,
ὡς ἑνός, ὅς τέ μοι ὕπνον ἀπεχθαίϱει ϰαὶ ἐδωδὴν,
μνωομένῳ, ἐπεὶ οὔ τις Ἀχαιῶν τόσσ' ἐμόγησεν,
ὅσσ' Ὀδυσεὺς ἐμόγησε ϰαὶ ἤϱατο. τῷ δ' ἄϱ' ἔμελλεν
αὐτῷ ϰήδε' ἔσεσθαι, ἐμοὶ δ' ἄχος αἰὲν ἄλαστον
ϰείνου, ὅπως δὴ δηϱὸν ἀποίχεται, οὐδέ τι ἴδμεν,
ζώει ὅ γ' ἦ τέθνηϰεν. ὀδύϱονται νύ που αὐτὸν
Λαέϱτης θ' ὁ γέϱων ϰαὶ ἐχέφϱων Πηνελόπεια
Τηλέμαχός θ', ὃν ἔλειπε νέον γεγαῶτ' ἐνὶ οἴϰῳ.

"Often, while grieving and mourning everyone
and while sitting in my home I sometimes
delight my mind with lamentation; and other times

I stop, since an excess of chilling lament comes quickly.
I don't grieve so much for all the others when I mourn
as for one who makes my sleep and my food hateful to me
as I remember him—since no one of the Achaeans
toiled and achieved as much as Odysseus did.
And it was is fate to suffer grief, and my woe [*akhos*] for him
is always unforgettable [*alaston*] because he has been gone so long
and we do not know if he is alive or dead. So, too, must they mourn for him,
I imagine, elderly Laertes, prudent Penelope and Telemachus,
the child he left just born in their household."

Here again, we find an expression of emotion similar to Penelope's. In contrast to Telemachus, Menelaos makes Odysseus exceptional, he singles him out from the many others and imagines the response of those bereft of him. The diction ties his response to Penelope's too: he marks out Odysseus as one who causes him grief that is also described as *alaston*.[32] Menelaos then explains his outsized pain: he does not know if Odysseus is alive or dead and he imagines how the family he left behind mourns for him.

In his rumination, Menelaos gives us the necessary clue to understanding the difference between Telemachus's response to the tale of the terrible homecomings and Penelope's. The unrelenting grief marked by the adjective *alastos* can be grief steeped in uncertainty or a lack of resolution: Penelope does not know if Odysseus is alive or dead and cannot stop mourning because of this. His tale cannot for her be either paradigmatic in offering a clear lesson or course of action or truly narrative because, for this moment, it has no closure. Telemachus's comments in Book 1 and soon after Menelaos speaks in Book 4 make it clear that he does not feel the same kind of grief because to his mind the story is over, Odysseus is dead: During an earlier conversation with Nestor, in fact, he declares Odysseus dead and incapable of achieving a "true return" (3.241). Later, when he asks Menelaos for some fame of his father (εἴ τινά μοι Ϗληηδόνα πατϱὸς ἐνίσποις, 4.317), he attempts to put a limit on the tale by framing this request as a wish to be informed of the "grievous ruin" of that man (Ϗείνου λυγϱὸν ὄλεθϱον ἐνισπεῖν, 4.323; a verbatim repetition of his request to Nestor).

The epic does clarify the dynamic between the pleasurable pain from a sad tale that has an end and the destructive wasting grief from an unresolved narrative. As I anticipated in discussing Eumaios's invitation

to Odysseus to indulge in telling each other's sad tales, the fact that the tales are complete and behind them is crucial for their ability to derive pleasure from them. The pleasure, too, operates on multiple levels: there is a positive cognitive feedback loop from telling a complete tale. We can also derive pleasure from the affirming process of creating, communicating, and confirming one's identity through narrative. In this way, a tale's completeness intersects with the epic's exploration of the remaking of Odysseus. As I emphasized in earlier chapters, stories that have been told and completed help to communicate who the characters are; the stories that we tell each other of our pasts establish identities for our present. And telling them is pleasurable, in part, because it constitutes a reaffirmation of who we are.

The *Odyssey* acknowledges this pleasure but also marks it out as potentially problematic. When stories are incomplete and cannot be told, the epic indicates that they may have detrimental effects too. Eumaios, in a slightly earlier scene with Odysseus, reveals that he too mourns without ceasing (*alastôn*) for Telemachus because he does not know if the boy is alive or dead, and it causes grief because he is helpless to affect any change at all (14.174–90):

νῦν αὖ παιδὸς ἄλαστον ὀδύρομαι, ὃν τέϰ᾽ Ὀδυσσεύς,
Τηλεμάχου. τὸν ἐπεὶ θρέψαν θεοὶ ἔρνεϊ ἶσον,
ϰαί μιν ἔφην ἔσσεσθαι ἐν ἀνδράσιν οὔ τι χέρεια
πατρὸς ἑοῖο φίλοιο, δέμας ϰαὶ εἶδος ἀγητόν,
τὸν δέ τις ἀθανάτων βλάψε φρένας ἔνδον ἐΐσας
ἠέ τις ἀνθρώπων· ὁ δ᾽ ἔβη μετὰ πατρὸς ἀϰουὴν
ἐς Πύλον ἠγαθέην· τὸν δὲ μνηστῆρες ἀγαυοὶ
οἴϰαδ᾽ ἰόντα λοχῶσιν, ὅπως ἀπὸ φῦλον ὄληται
νώνυμον ἐξ Ἰθάϰης Ἀρϰεισίου ἀντιθέοιο.
ἀλλ᾽ ἦ τοι ϰεῖνον μὲν ἐάσομεν, ἤ ϰεν ἁλώῃ
ἦ ϰε φύγῃ ϰαί ϰέν οἱ ὑπέρσχῃ χεῖρα Κρονίων.
ἀλλ᾽ ἄγε μοι σύ, γεραιέ, τὰ σ᾽ αὐτοῦ ϰήδε᾽ ἐνίσπες
ϰαί μοι τοῦτ᾽ ἀγόρευσον ἐτήτυμον, ὄφρ᾽ ἐὺ εἰδῶ·
τίς πόθεν εἰς ἀνδρῶν; πόθι τοι πόλις ἠδὲ τοϰῆες;
ὁππποίης τ᾽ ἐπὶ νηὸς ἀφίϰεο; πῶς δέ σε ναῦται
ἤγαγον εἰς Ἰθάϰην; τίνες ἔμμεναι εὐχετόωντο;
οὐ μὲν γάρ τί σε πεζὸν ὀΐομαι ἐνθάδ᾽ ἱϰέσθαι.

"But now, I mourn unceasingly [*alastôn*] for the child Telemachus,
The one whom Odysseus fathered, the one the gods raised up like a

shoot—
I believed that he would be no less among men
than his dear father, marvelous in both size and shape;
but some god visited him and ruined his mind, or perhaps some man.
He went off in search of news of his father to sacred Pylos
and the illustrious suitors are setting an ambush as he returns home
so that they can wipe the clan of Arkesios out of Ithaca, nameless.
But, really, we must let him be: either he will be taken
or he will escape as Kronos' son protects him.
Now, come, old man, tell me your own sorrows
and tell me this truthfully so I may know [you].
Who are you and where are you from? Where is your city and your parents?
What kind of a ship did you arrive on? How did sailors
bring you to Ithaca? Who did they claim to be?
For I don't believe at all that you came here on foot."

At this point it is clear that the epic is marking out the cases of Odysseus and Telemachus as special in causing more grief than anybody else's. This passage comments both upon the general import of "sorrows" as a marker of identity and the way that the *Odyssey* treats Odysseus and his son. Eumaios draws a direct connection between hearing about his guest's suffering and knowing him. But there is a tension between the narrative he asks for and the one that causes him pain: the second has a clear end (the beggar in Eumaios's hut), while Telemachus's tale does not. The adjective Eumaios use to describe his emotions about Telemachus, *alastos*, is also applied to Odysseus's own absence by Penelope and Menelaos. The word's etymology points most clearly to a root that resonates with a sense of "unforgettable"—marking something that cannot be forgotten, no matter how hard one tries.[33] This is, perhaps, appropriate in a way for epic, which is about securing immortal fame, but the effect it has on those who experience it is more paralyzing than enchanting.

To clarify further: so far, I have noted the adjective *alastos* applied to grief and grieving over events that have no clear ending (with *penthos*, *akhos*, and *oduromai*). My proposal is that it is the absence of an ending for these narratives that causes their witnesses exceptional grief, here glossed as "unforgettable." These associations have a metanarrative and metacognitive dimension: such grief is connected both to the incompleteness of the *Odyssey* and to our cognitive desire to turn events into action-narratives that have clear outcomes.

A final example occurs near the end of Book 24. During the Ithacan assembly on the deaths of the suitors, Eupeithes stands to speak about what the aggrieved families should do. In the previous chapter, I emphasized that the contents of his speech represent the constraint imposed by a mythological tradition of vengeance. Moreover, the way that Eupeithes is described helps to enrich our understanding of a character's stances towards narrative, while also explaining the final death of the epic, and pointing to some explanations for the epic's final therapeutic steps. Before he speaks, the narrative describes him (24.422–25):

τοῖσιν δ' Εὐπείθης ἀνά θ' ἵστατο κλαὶ μετέειπε·
παιδὸς γάρ οἱ ἄλαστον ἐνὶ φρεσὶ πένθος ἔκειτο,
Ἀντινόου, τὸν πρῶτον ἐνήρατο δῖος Ὀδυσσεύς·
τοῦ ὅ γε δάκρυ χέων ἀγορήσατο κλαὶ μετέειπεν·

Among them then Eupeithes stood and spoke,
for unforgettable grief [*alaston ... penthos*] filled his thoughts
over his son Antinoos whom Odysseus killed first.
As he shed tears for him, he addressed them and proclaimed.

This passage departs from the earlier examples in significant ways. First, the narrative describes Eupeithes as suffering "unforgettable grief"—in the earlier passages, it is the characters themselves who use the phrase. Second, Eupeithes is speaking of someone who is already dead and whom they have just buried, but who has not yet been avenged. The grief attributed to Eupeithes is not the same as that suffered by Penelope and Menelaos, but it expands our understanding of what is *alaston* as described by Homer. Eupeithes specifies that if they do not exact retribution for the deaths of their families they will be "ashamed forever" (κατηφέες ἐσσόμεθ' αἰεί.) and that his failure will be "an object of reproach for men to come to learn of" (λώβη γὰρ τάδε γ' ἐστὶ κλαὶ ἐσσομένοισι πυθέσθαι, 24.433).

Eupeithes's grief has a special connection to Penelope's—that is, both of them are tortured by a story that has no end: Penelope, and Menelaos, powerlessly wait for resolution to their anxiety about Odysseus, while Eupeithes suffers because he believes he must act to continue the story and write a new ending for his son. This is an important development in the *Odyssey*'s emphasis on human agency. The compulsion to act is tied lexically, as discussed earlier, from the *alaston penthos* to the noun *alastor* "avenger," which are related by folk-etymology. To possess a grief that is

alaston transforms you into one who seeks to complete it through retributive justice.[34] In addition, the mythical and poetic resonance of the parent who loses a child and suffers *unforgettable sorrow* translates the particular grief Eupeithes feels into a general narrative desire open to audience interpretation. Again, as I outlined in the last chapter, Thetis, Tros, and Rhea feel a similar irreplaceable loss when their children are taken from them.

Modern studies in emotions lend some support to the paralytic effect that a certain type of grief can have on people coping with loss. Unresolved grief—sometimes called "ambiguous loss"—has been isolated as a special category with symptoms similar to "anxiety, depression, and somatic illnesses" (Boss 1999:10). In many ways, it shares qualities with helplessness—a lack of resolution or completion of the process of grieving can perpetuate inaction and undermine confidence in one's abilities or the fairness of the world. Further studies demonstrate that individuals who face "complicated grief" reveal a diminished capacity for attention and compromised cognitive functions (Hall et. al. 2014). This is caused, in part, by a dysfunctional return to the cause of uncertainty, "a repetitive loop of intense yearning and longing that becomes the major focus of their lives."[35] The courses of treatment effective for unresolved grief have significant implications for my arguments about the emotional impact of narrative in the *Odyssey*. Pharmacological interventions have been shown to be of limited efficacy. Instead, storytelling and long-term psychotherapy have proved to provide the only durative relief.[36] And, as discussed earlier, Jonathan Shay has described well the significance of the communalization of grief as an essential step in returning a warrior from the isolation of rage and cycles of despair.[37]

Without the intervention of a therapeutic narrative, then, people who suffer from unresolved grief remain like the mythical parents who suffer from "unforgettable grief," trapped in a cycle of rumination and inaction. But pre-authorized narrative responses or patterns can also offer such minds avenues out of painful loops. So, when the pattern is applied to Eupeithes—and for the end of the *Odyssey*—it introduces a narrative pattern that provides Eupeithes the only relief he knows and directs the epic's closure. Children are open-ended tales, narratives to continue after the end of the parent. A dead child is still not a closed tale, but one whose story must be closed by someone else. And when blame can be apportioned, revenge is not just the quickest resolution, it is the primary end that convention can offer to this tale. In short, Eupeithes addresses his own endless grief with a narrative solution: he plans to author the end

of the tale by killing Odysseus. He applies a paradigmatic solution: Odysseus has killed his son; Odysseus needs to die.

Eupeithes's grief, then, advances a thematic treatment of the relationship between the closure of a narrative and the experience of grief. The epic itself closes its own narrative shortly. Before discussing this, however, it is worth noting that invocations of unforgettable pain are not the only markers of the *Odyssey*'s interest in the completion of narratives in general or in Book 24. In the opening episode of the book that ends the poem, it reframes the nature of storytelling with another account of Penelope's weaving trick.

D. The Sign of the Shroud

So far, I have proposed that the *Odyssey* plays upon a tension between the pleasure that comes from hearing a story that is complete and the pain that comes from not knowing how it ends. While this pain appears unending in the cases of Penelope and Menelaos because they have no model for action, it becomes a compulsive drive for Eupeithes because he believes he has a paradigmatic solution for his own narrative experience. Thus, our understanding of the cognitive foundation of our relationship to story helps us recognize that this relationship can also have maladaptive effects. The constraint that such cognitive investment in narrative can have is echoed near the beginning of Book 24 as well.

Where the example of Eupeithes shows an attempt to generate a conclusion to a story in progress, the re-telling of some of the epic's events during the so-called "Second Nekyia" at the beginning of Book 24 features a dead suitor attempting to relay events that have reached a completion. When Amphimedon tells the story of the death of the suitors to Agamemnon at the beginning of the book, its longest portion records Penelope's trick. She promised to marry when she completed a burial shroud for Laertes and kept weaving by day only to unweave her work every night until she was betrayed (24.125–55). At first, this story has a clear function: it is an illustration of Penelope's famous guile, which shows how similar to her husband she is, explains how she resisted the suitors for so long, and characterizes their frustration.[38] In addition, since the tale likely was famous outside of this epic, it stands as a particularly Homeric way of appropriating and embedding popular tales into itself.

A problem with understanding the use of this tale is that this is actually the *third* time in the epic a version of it has been offered. In Book

2, Antinoos relays the story to the assembled Ithacans (2.85–110). And then in Book 19, Penelope relates it to a disguised Odysseus (19.137–61). This repetition allows the scene to function as meta-narrative reflection on Homeric art; in addition to much else, the shroud stands as a metaphor for the completion of stories. While the language has only minor divergences, there are details added with each retelling.[39] Most important among these differences is that in the final description the completion of the robe is followed by the return of Odysseus and the completion of the *Odyssey*, to a point (24.146–55):[40]

> ὣς τὸ μὲν ἐξετέλεσσε καὶ οὐκ ἐθέλουσ', ὑπ' ἀνάγκης.
> εὖθ' ἡ φᾶρος ἔδειξεν, ὑφήνασα μέγαν ἱστόν,
> πλύνασ', ἠελίῳ ἐναλίγκιον ἠὲ σελήνῃ,
> καὶ τότε δή ῥ' Ὀδυσῆα κακός ποθεν ἤγαγε δαίμων
> ἀγροῦ ἐπ' ἐσχατιήν, ὅθι δώματα ναῖε συβώτης.
> ἔνθ' ἦλθεν φίλος υἱὸς Ὀδυσσῆος θείοιο,
> ἐκ Πύλου ἠμαθόεντος ἰὼν σὺν νηῒ μελαίνῃ·
> τὼ δὲ μνηστῆρσιν θάνατον κακὸν ἀρτύναντε
> ἵκοντο προτὶ ἄστυ περικλυτόν, ἦ τοι Ὀδυσσεὺς
> ὕστερος, αὐτὰρ Τηλέμαχος πρόσθ' ἡγεμόνευε.
>
> "So she completed it, even though she was unwilling, under force.
> When she showed us the robe she wove on the great loom,
> After she washed it, it shone like the sun or the moon.
> And then an evil god brought Odysseus from somewhere
> To the farthest part of the land, where the swineherd lives.
> That's where godly Odysseus's dear son came home, too
> From sandy Pylos, sailing with his black ship.
> The two of them came to the famous city,
> Devising an evil death for the suitors—indeed, Odysseus
> Came later, but it was Telemachus who went before him."

By narrating the events in this way, Amphimedon appears to be translating them into an action story in which there is a causal relationship between the completion of the weaving and the completion of the *Odyssey*'s narrative(s). He and the suitors are not responsible for their deaths; but rather a god and Odysseus, with Penelope's help. This passage shows one possible interpretation for the events of the epic, where there is no clear collusion between Penelope and Odysseus. The contrast between Amphimedon's attempt to ascribe agency more broadly and the epic

narrative's approach invites the audience to reflect both on how individuals imagine causal connections and on discursive elements in the *Odyssey*. Here, the epic depicts Amphimedon as blaming the gods for his own suffering (confirming Zeus's lament discussed above). So, on one level, this passage dramatizes a Homeric mind trying to make sense of a series of events and attributing agency and causality in different directions, now Penelope, now Odysseus and a god, now Telemachus. In his quest to tell a story that makes sense, Amphimedon actually weaves together a fairly "true" picture of agency and causality.[41] But he also imposes an interpretation on the tale, positing Penelope's collusion, which the external audience did not witness. The epic, then, presents a character attempting ex post facto to interpret his own experiences in a way that allows him to make sense of the world he inhabits, even as the audience of the poem is engaged in a similar process.

At the beginning of Book 24, then, the *Odyssey* re-centers problems of how we interpret the tales we hear and the impact of our own expectations and needs on the way we retell our stories. The meta-poetic and meta-cognitive nature of this closing gesture is reinforced by the act of weaving the shroud and the object itself. As many have observed, weaving is often a metaphor not just for intelligence *per se* but for poetic composition in Greek culture and others.[42] In the *Iliad*, Helen appears weaving a *pharos* that depicts "The many struggles of the horse-taming Trojans and the bronze-girded Achaeans / All the things they had suffered for her at Ares's hands" Τρώων θ' ἱπποδάμων καὶ Ἀχαιῶν χαλκοχιτώνων, οὕς ἑθεν εἵνεκ' ἔπασχον ὑπ' Ἄρηος παλαμάων, 3.137–38). And elsewhere she seems keenly aware that her story will be the subject of future songs (6.357–58). Andromache, too, in the *Iliad*, weaves a garment whose imagery is described, if briefly as "A double-folded raiment, on which she embroidered delicate flowers" (δίπλακα πορφυρέην, ἐν δὲ θρόνα ποικίλ' ἔπασσε, 22.441) An ancient scholar recognized in Helen's weaving an embedded metaphor for Homer's own art, which he calls "a worthy archetype for his own poetry" (ἀξιόχρεων ἀρχέτυπον ἀνέπλασεν ὁ ποιητὴς τῆς ἰδίας ποιήσεως, Schol. bT ad *Il.* 3.126–27).

There is a problem, however, if we pursue weaving as a metaphor for the *Odyssey*'s narrative art. Weaving appears throughout the poem, but its decoration goes undescribed. Helen gives Telemachus a garment to give to his future wife (*Od.* 15.123–30). Kalypso (5.62) and Kirkē (10.222) also weave while singing (what songs might they sing?). Nausikaa gives a robe to Odysseus (6.214), which Arētē recognizes because she made it (7.234–35). We even hear that the Naiads who live on the shore in Ithaca

"weave sea-purple garments, wondrous to see" (φάϱε' ὑφαίνουσιν ἁλιπόϱφυϱα, θαῦμα ἰδέσθαι, 13.108), but we never truly *see* them. The lack of description might be less confounding, if Penelope's delaying has not also been understood as equivalent to the delaying narrative strategies of the *Odyssey*.[43] But few commentators, ancient or modern, have worried about what might actually be pictured on the finely woven cloth. An exception is Barbara Clayton who writes (2004:34):

> Homer's audience would have assumed an implicit narrative component in Penelope's web, perhaps that she is depicting the heroic deeds of Laertes ... I do not think that Homer's silence on this point represents the omission of an unimportant detail. I would argue instead that Homer deliberately leaves the narrative content of the web within the realm of potentiality. And this aspect of potentiality in turn complements the fact that Penelope's web is potentially never complete.

In other words, the undescribed content of the shroud is a metaphor for the unbounded and incomplete nature of the *Odyssey* itself. It simultaneously responds both to our reluctance to end a tale and our need to do so. Its completion, coterminous with Odysseus's return, seals its connection with that narrative—especially considering that, like the tale of the epic, the shroud was woven and unwoven before it was finally made. But the refusal to provide an image on the shroud—or to describe the image that is there—leaves narrative work to the audience itself.[44] Amphimedon emerges in the poem as a stand-in for someone who writes his own story on the blank surface of the shroud. But since he is an observer and a participant in the narrative, his retelling of the tale engages with the themes I discussed regarding the way Homeric characters process and act upon narratives. Even in the underworld, Amphimedon tells his story in an attempt to make sense of it or to control how it is received. He shows us how he completed it by placing himself in a perspective where he was the victim of unexpected collusion. In doing so, he models (mis)-reading for the narrative's audiences and, further, contributes to the epic's presentation of the impact of narrative on human life. The blankness of the shroud leaves the narrative work to us and compels us to finish its tale. We have to tell that story, just as we have to imagine what happens after the end of the *Odyssey*.

E. The End of a Poem

While the epic dramatizes our need to provide an end to a tale through the depiction of Eupeithes's death and an exploration of the theme of unforget-table grief, its deployment of the shroud motif applies an implicit understanding of the human narrative mind by creating a puzzle for its audiences. Our modern understanding of cognitive science can help us understand the effect this has *outside the poem*. The unexplained here becomes not a cause of grief but instead an opportunity for agency.

I opened this chapter discussing some of the thematic and compositional problems of the *Odyssey*'s final book. While teaching, I have often offered a bland assurance that "it all makes sense," eventually. But it is certainly within the epic's range of narrative strategies *not* to make sense or to challenge our expectations for narrative, in part because these very expectations are based on other narratives. At the same time, it is clear that the device of raveling and unraveling narrative has become for the epic a powerful sign of indeterminacy and control. Book 24 returns to this image and features someone whose life (and story) is over, because the epic wants us to think of the shroud and its attendant interpretive issues as the story ends.

Earlier, I emphasized the powerful desire on the part of the audience to hear the end of the tale. This desire is connected to our causal sense of narrative, embedded on a cognitive level and present in a compulsion to bring stories—even our own—to completion. This perspective makes me hear the repeated claim of the shroud's final making differently: "so she completed it, though unwilling, under compulsion" (ὣς τὸ μὲν ἐξετέλεσσε ϰαὶ οὐϰ ἐθέλουσ', ὑπ' ἀνάγϰης, 2.110=24.146). *Anangkē* in Greek poetry can signal physical force or threat but, it can be generalized as an externally imposed compulsion, something like fate. Thus, this line signals that the sign of the shroud is also in part about the necessary completion of a thing, be it a garment, a poem, or even a life itself.

In its retelling and redeployment as a sign of closure, the shroud accrues more meaning as a story told among the dead, characters whose lives and stories are now closed. Book 24, then, starts with a moment of narrative surplus, modelling how part of its own tale is received by audiences who have no further tales to live. But before Amphimedon speaks, we get to eavesdrop on a conversation between Agamemnon and Achilles (24.93–97).

> ὣς σὺ μὲν οὐδὲ θανὼν ὄνομ' ὤλεσας, ἀλλά τοι αἰεὶ
> πάντας ἐπ' ἀνθϱώπους ϰλέος ἔσσεται ἐσθλόν, Ἀχιλλεῦ·
> αὐτὰϱ ἐμοὶ τί τόδ' ἦδος, ἐπεὶ πόλεμον τολύπευσα;

ἐν νόστῳ γάϱ μοι Ζεὺς μήσατο λυγϱὸν ὄλεθϱον
Αἰγίσθου ὑπὸ χεϱσὶ ϰαὶ οὐλομένης ἀλόχοιο.

So you, didn't lose your name even in death, but your fame
Will always be noble among all men, Achilles.
But what consolation is this for me when I completed the war?
Since Zeus devised grievous death for me in my homecoming
At the hands of Aigisthos and my accursed wife.

Agamemnon says this to Achilles after the latter has sympathized with him that he did not receive the glorious burial he deserved after fighting at Troy (24.22–34). Before the central players of the Trojan War tradition even get to hear about Odysseus's tale, they appear contemplating their own status as objects of fame and the meaning of their tales. With this the poem reflects a basic worldview: nothing new happens for the dead. They are frozen in state, mulling over the content and nature of their own tales. This has obvious connections to the epic itself, insofar as Agamemnon reflects from below upon the very tale Zeus contemplated from above. But before some type of *synkrisis* or comparison can be completed, their reminiscence is interrupted by the arrival of Amphimedon, who tells the tale of the shroud and ends by lamenting that the suitors are not yet buried. Agamemnon responds only to the part about Penelope (24.192–202):

ὄλβιε Λαέϱταο πάϊ, πολυμήχαν' Ὀδυσσεῦ,
ἦ ἄϱα σὺν μεγάλῃ ἀϱετῇ ἐϰτήσω ἄϰοιτιν·
ὡς ἀγαθαὶ φϱένες ἦσαν ἀμύμονι Πηνελοπείῃ,
ϰούϱῃ Ἰϰαϱίου, ὡς εὖ μέμνητ' Ὀδυσῆος,
ἀνδϱὸς ϰουϱιδίου. τῶ οἱ ϰλέος οὔ ποτ' ὀλεῖται
ἧς ἀϱετῆς, τεύξουσι δ' ἐπιχθονίοισιν ἀοιδὴν
ἀθάνατοι χαϱίεσσαν ἐχέφϱονι Πηνελοπείῃ,
οὐχ ὡς Τυνδαϱέου ϰούϱη ϰαϰὰ μήσατο ἔϱγα,
ϰουϱίδιον ϰτείνασα πόσιν, στυγεϱὴ δέ τ' ἀοιδὴ
ἔσσετ' ἐπ' ἀνθϱώπους, χαλεπὴν δέ τε φῆμιν ὀπάσσει
θηλυτέϱῃσι γυναιξί, ϰαὶ ἥ ϰ' εὐεϱγὸς ἔῃσιν.

Blessed child of Laertes, much-devising Odysseus,
You really did it, you secured a wife with magnificent virtue!
That's how noble the brains are for blameless Penelope,
Ikarios' daughter, how well she remembered Odysseus,
Her wedded husband. The fame of her virtue will never perish,

And the gods will craft a pleasing song
Of prudent Penelope for mortals on the earth.
This is not the way for Tyndareos' daughter.
She devised wicked deeds and since she killed
Her wedded husband, a hateful song Will be hers among men, she will attract harsh speech
To the race of women, even for one who is good.

In this response Agamemnon is obsessed again with the idea of *kleos* and the reception of narrative. And through this speech and the one previously cited, the epic also expresses concern for how narrative is used. Agamemnon praises Penelope for her intelligence and loyalty, but only as a foil for lamenting Klytemnestra again: he claims that her ill-fame is so powerful that it will negatively affect future stories about women regardless of their behavior. It is easy to see a kind of negative expectancy effect in Agamemnon's prediction—the cognitive bias that makes us anticipate bad outcomes. Additionally, we can witness Agamemnon selectively interpreting the tale: he does not celebrate Odysseus's accomplishment in the slaughter, but emphasizes instead the part of the tale that resonates (or dissonates) most strongly with his own. Thus, this passage reflects more generally on the nature of paradigmatic thinking I first brought up in the Introduction. Agamemnon's speech suggests that women will suffer harsh repute (*khalepēn phēmin*) because of the hateful song told of his wife, whatever the quality of the "real" story. We apply a paradigmatic tale that alters the way we receive and repeat what we know and hear. Like Agamemnon, we respond to narratives that resonate with what we already know.

With these themes, the *Odyssey*'s final book begins with concerns about the reception of narrative and reflects upon the difficult challenges of bringing a tale to its end. The conversations of the dead also prompt audiences to think about what kind of tale this is: Achilles received immortal fame for dying in war; Agamemnon became part of a negative homecoming paradigm with his wife; and in these comparisons we also find Penelope's tale yoked to Klytemnestra's negative paradigm. The open-end remains for Odysseus's own story. By retelling Odysseus's *killing of the suitors* within parenthetical considerations of different types of fame the epic makes clear that it is *his* story at issue here and that its final weaving makes a selection that has a final say on what kind of story it becomes. The end of the *Odyssey* acknowledges, then, the paradigmatic forces exerted on its closure, alongside the compulsion to bring the story

to an end, even as it attempts to seize control of them.

F. Amnesty and Closure

The *Odyssey*, I have suggested, frames the problems of bringing closure to a story using three signs: the formulaic pattern of "unforgettable" grief, which culminates in Eupeithes choosing the revenge paradigm; the absent image on Penelope's shroud re-introduced at the beginning of Book 24; and the thematic conversation during that same Nekyia, where the audience is invited to think about what kind of story this one will be based on the nature of its ending. In their own ways, each sign is about paradigmatic thinking and presuming an end to a tale. Eupeithes writes his own ending for the *Odyssey* by placing himself in the narrative of the bereft parent; Penelope uses narrative and design the way the epic itself does: to forestall bringing a tale to completion. But once compulsion moves her to closure, we are left to wonder what sort of tale she would weave. Agamemnon and Achilles are ciphers for the audience in two ways: they weigh and measure their own tales to define them and to anticipate possible endings. The cumulative effect is that the poem's external audience is experiencing discomfort at not knowing the ending to Odysseus's story. We are weighing the possible outcomes and comparing them to the stories we have already heard.

Given this set-up, the *Odyssey* can have no truly satisfactory ending. In part, the resolution the gods manufacture is aimed toward the threat of the endless cycle of violence anticipated by Eupeithes's decision to pursue revenge. Athena poses the problem to Zeus, and by extension the audience, and he responds (24.478–86):

> τέϰνον ἐμόν, τί με ταῦτα διείϱεαι ἠδὲ μεταλλᾷς;
> οὐ γὰϱ δὴ τοῦτον μὲν ἐβούλευσας νόον αὐτή,
> ὡς ἦ τοι ϰείνους Ὀδυσεὺς ἀποτείσεται ἐλθών;
> ἔϱξον ὅπως ἐθέλεις· ἐϱέω δέ τοι ὡς ἐπέοιϰεν.
> ἐπεὶ δὴ μνηστῆϱας ἐτείσατο δῖος Ὀδυσσεύς,
> ὅϱϰια πιστὰ ταμόντες ὁ μὲν βασιλευέτω αἰεί,
> ἡμεῖς δ' αὖ παίδων τε ϰασιγνήτων τε φόνοιο
> ἔϰλησιν θέωμεν· τοὶ δ' ἀλλήλους φιλεόντων
> ὡς τὸ πάϱος, πλοῦτος δὲ ϰαὶ εἰϱήνη ἅλις ἔστω.

My child, why do you inquire or ask me about these things?

Didn't you contrive this plan yourself, that Odysseus
would exact vengeance on these men after he returned home?
Do whatever you want—but I will say what is fitting.
Since Odysseus has paid back the suitors,
let him be king again for good and take sacred oaths.
Let us force a forgetting of that slaughter of children and relatives.
Let all the people be friendly towards each other
as before. Let there be abundant wealth and peace.

Athena stands in for audience questions about how this turn of events—half of the Ithacans unify to face Odysseus's small household—can possibly be resolved. Her question reduces the possible endings to two: "will you make further terrible war and dread strife / or will you establish friendship on both sides" (ἦ πϱοτέϱω πόλεμόν τε ϰαϰὸν ϰαὶ φύλοπιν αἰνὴν / τεύξεις, ἦ φιλότητα μετ' ἀμφοτέϱοισι τίθησθα; 24.475–76). As discussed in the previous chapter, the poem responds to the psychological complexity of the political situation with a paradigmatic choice: (continuing) war or an (artificial) peace. Zeus leaves room for the possibility that Athena might, if she wanted, end the poem differently (ὅπως ἐθέλεις), before he offers the choice for peace. The choice, of course, is not enacted simply and directly: Eupeithes charges Odysseus and his family and falls at the end of Laertes's spear. Eupeithes—along with his narrative claim—becomes the scapegoat sacrificed to secure Ithacan peace.[45]

Again, as discussed in the last chapter, the Ithacan amnesty is a political expedient that is also representative of the willful forgetfulness necessary to achieve and maintain a political union. From the perspective of Narrative Therapy discussed in Chapter 4 such a choice to forget is a therapeutic intervention for a thought or memory that is undermining or potentially harmful. And, as becomes clear from the discussion of amnesties in general in the last chapter, selective forgetting is, in part, a necessary process of creating a cultural memory that increases emphasis on communal good.

But these answers, while useful, do not cover the full range of responses to the sudden resolution; nor do they bring the story to a *complete* end. Zeus and Athena do not deny the right of Eupeithes to his anger; they just sweep it away. And even this ending is somewhat false: we know from Teiresias's prophecy that Odysseus will leave Ithaca again. Furthermore, what do we make of the conflict between the *unforgettable pain* (*alaston penthos*) Eupeithes feels and the *eklēsis*—complete

forgetfulness—Zeus distributes? On a lexical level, the one—*eklēsis*—is an undoing, an unweaving, of the other—*alastos*—since their folk etymologies help them resonate with the root of forgetfulness *lath-*. So with the eternal false closure, the divine intervention may also bring the promise of eternal grief from pain unresolved. The forgetting unburdens the self and the community of pain and the intervention creates a new narrative to accommodate goals of peace, harmony, and closure. But this challenges my reading of the epic as a contemplation of human psychology, since the loss of the story is the loss of an identity, an erasure of a version of the self.[46]

In this way, the poem's resolution by oblivion has narrative as well as psychological ramifications. So, just briefly, it is worth re-considering the foregoing pattern that sets up an internal framework for how the epic ends. First, the epic features internal audiences deriving pleasure from listening to stories. But at least some of these audiences have bad things happen to them: the stories are to no avail for the suitors, who are slaughtered. Odysseus entertains the Phaeacians and they reward him with a trip home, earning Poseidon's enmity and a potential erasure of their culture. Others are tortured by the tales they hear, and this formula of unforgettable grief points us in their direction: Menelaos languishes in his anxiety about what happened to Odysseus, as do Penelope and Telemachus. Eupeithes's unforgettable grief functions as a paradigmatic tale that forces him to choose between bad options: be ashamed or seek vengeance. Of all these audiences, we see Telemachus facing the tale of his father's unknown fate, going on a journey to hear more tales, and deciding to turn home to pursue action; and we see Odysseus using his ability to tell stories to manipulate other people, to re-create his sense of self, and to secure his passage home.

So, the epic is providing messages about being passively entertained by tales and the choices forced by the paradigmatic option. But the biggest leap I want to make is to suggest that this pattern of marking off open-ended narratives, by making us yearn for the end of Odysseus's tale and by prolonging the action for so long before we get it, sets us up for disappointment on purpose, so that we will reconsider what type of audience members *we are* and how we have listened to the tale. It is in this turn that the epic reflects most severely on storytelling itself, capitalizes upon our attraction to it, and helps explain its own difficult ending. The end of the *Odyssey* is a therapeutic lesson and comment on the creation of necessary fictions that become our realities. The *Iliad*, as I mentioned earlier, ends with the burial of Hektor. Its end is a funeral. In a hyper-

poetic way, the end of the poem is the end of a life. The story has a beginning, middle, and a sensible end. Even if it is sad, it still satisfies.[47]

The forced end of the *Odyssey* runs the risk of giving its audiences something unresolvable and unforgettable, of leaving us with *penthos alaston*. Such disruption produces, as discussed above, a cognitive dissonance, which can, in turn, provide motivation to resolve it by seeking out a different explanation or integrating extant information into a new pattern.[48] To return to more classical terminology, the ending transforms into a moment of what we would call *aporia* or pathlessness in a Platonic dialogue. In recent work, Laura Candiotto argues that emotion and reason collaborate cognitively in the aporetic state, in part because of the importance of recognizing errors and contradictions.[49] Candiotto draws on cognitive studies that examine "epistemic emotions" to argue that the aporetic state entails a "transformative process that allows us to find, within negativity itself, the key to imagine an otherness" (242). Further, she suggests that the emotional affect and cognitive field required to achieve this state is necessarily dependent upon group intellectual and emotional work, what some have called the extended mind and emotions.[50] From the perspective of performance, we would here understand the instrumental nature of the audience in shaping its own and each other's perception of and response to the narrative. Except, in this, the audience itself is remade as well.

Like the split debate among the suitors discussed last chapter, the *aporia* at the end of the *Odyssey* invites us to go back to the beginning and examine the problem again. The jarring finish may just be the thing to shift us out of a passive, paradigmatic mindset. It is an invitation to the narrative mode, to reflect upon the axis of this story and question the decisions that were made: if revenge is wrong for Eupeithes, was it wrong for Odysseus? Was there some other way the suitors could have been handled? Who is this man who has come home? Are we supposed to be like him?

If the epic leaves us with *unforgettable* grief, it is the pain of not having our questions answered and knowing we are not likely to. The *Odyssey* shows some characters finding pleasure in a tale that has a clear ending and others feeling incurable pain at a story without an end. In turn, it replicates this pain and confusion by offering its own audiences a moment of deceptive or false closure. These moves are critical of myth and they echo both what Aristotle says about narrative—that we desire what has a clear middle and end—and what modern science has told us about the human mind, that we desire clear causality and closure so much that we

will fabricate it if necessary. The grief that the epic's players experience at not knowing Odysseus's fate, echoes the real-life pain of not knowing a loved-one's fate, not understanding how to live after a momentous event, or the anxiety of an unknown death that awaits everyone. Such abruptness and lack of closure plays upon our reflexive desire to know a story's end and demands that its audiences consider what kind of endings might be possible.

But Odysseus lives to enjoy another day, and, in fact, so do we. This sudden end reflects not just on the sorrow of the incomplete narrative and the paralysis that comes from not knowing that we find in the *Odyssey*, but also on the storytelling hero himself and the rejection of stories cast in a rigidly paradigmatic mode, stories that impose clear lessons despite being ill-fit to a new context. The one figure who survives and thrives manifestly masters and manipulates narrative, nor does he let the fact that he does not know the end of his own tale stop him. He gets delayed, he loses control of the story, but once he begins his return he reclaims agency, in part through the stories he tells the Phaeacians and the lies and deceptions he weaves in his return to Ithaca. While those who passively consume narrative become either his instruments or his victims, those who wait to hear the end of his tale feel an anguish they cannot forget, because someone else is in charge of the interpretation of their tale.

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1 Many of the arguments in this chapter are explored in Christensen 2018d.

2 Schol. in *Od*. 23.296 HMQ list this as "the end [*péras*] of the *Odyssey*," whereas Schol. in *Od*. 23.296 M.V. Vind. 133 attests this as "the end [*télos*] of the *Odyssey*"; see Steinruck (2008:48) for a recent discussion of *péras*. On the poem's "notorious endlessness": Buchan 2004:4.

3 For a concise discussion, see Russo, Fernandez-Galiano, and Heubeck 1992:342–45; cf. Erbse 1972:166–244; Moulton 1974:152–157; Steinruck 2008:47–48.

4 Commentary on the *Odyssey*, II.308: ὅλης ὡς εἰπεῖν Ὀδυσσείας ἐπιτομὴν, εἶτα καὶ τὸν ὕστερον ἀναγνωρισμὸν Ὀδυσσέως τὸν πρὸς τὸν Λαέρτην καὶ τὰ ἐκεῖ θαυμασίως πλαττόμενα καὶ ἄλλα οὐκ ὀλίγα.

5 Against Book 24: Page 1955:101–36. For features that mark Book 24 as an "accretion to the *Odyssey*'s Homeric Core," see Marks 2008:64; cf. Kirk 1962:248–51; Page 1995:101–36; West 1989:132–33; Others have defended the unity of the epic, e.g., Moulton 1974; Lord 1960:177-85; Kullman 1992:291–304.

6 De Jong (2001:565) argues that "the final scenes of the *Odyssey* are indispensable," though she notes, strangely, that the "narrator rushes through the last part"; cf. Steinruck 2008:50: "the whole set of events ... are told in a hurry and presented as in a strange mix." Louden (2011:304) suggests that 24 is a postponed continuation of 22.

7 See Kelly 2007:382–87, especially.

8 Wender 1978:63: "lame, hasty, awkward, abrupt"; Bakker 2013:129: "ugly."

9 For a tripartite division of Book 24, see Moulton 1975 and Wender 1978.

10 See Russo, Fernandez-Galiano, and Heubeck 1992:356–57: Aristarchus saw 24.1–204 as spurious. For de Jong (2001:566–67) this scene may be a sequel to the first Nekyia in highlighting the comparisons between Agamemnon and the other heroes and their wives; cf. Wender 1978:39–42.

11 For this scene, see Chapter 5.

12 For de Jong (2001:583) the assembly corresponds structurally to 2.1–259; cf. Russo, Fernandez-Galiano, and Heubeck 1992:405. On the impossible situation of the trial, see Marks 2008:68–71. Odysseus expects violent reprisals, see Russo, Fernandez-Galiano, and Heubeck 1992:405.

13 Russo, Fernandez-Galiano, and Heubeck 1992:405–6: structural parallel to 12.295. Louden (2011:304–5) believes that the divine counsels at 12.376 (Zeus and Helios) and 13.125–159 (Zeus and Poseidon) echo the apocalyptic motifs of the conflict.

14 On *deus ex machina* in tragedy and this scene, see de Jong 2001:586; cf. Wender 1978:64.

15 Marks 2008:78: the end of the *Odyssey* has "disturbing aspects."

16 For these distinctions, see Graziosi and Haubold 2005 and, recently, Barker and Christensen 2019:46.

17 See Marks 2008:66–72.

18 On the *Odyssey* and generic definitions, see for a start Slatkin 2011.

19 For the *Odyssey*'s awareness of Odysseus's death in the broader mythical and epic tradition, see Burgess 2015 (with bibliography).

20 For wedding ritual as underpinning the plot of the reunion of Odysseus and Penelope, see Seaford 1994, chap. 2.

21 For the extent to which pleasure and mimesis are interconnected in Homer, see Macleod 2001:300–1, who also emphasizes the delight of poetry and the paradox "that it gives pleasure though its subject is always painful" (301). He concludes that both *Iliad* 24 and *Odyssey* 8 demonstrate that inspiring or offering pity is more important than glory (308). This shared understanding gained through our "sense of common weakness and suffering" "gives men a reason to treat each other with respect" (309). For the importance of enchantment and entertainment in the Homeric conception of poetry, see Walsh 1984, chap. 1.

22 Bruner 1986:18. As Erwin Cook points out to me, from a Kantian perspective, such causal knowledge is intrinsically internal, an a priori category of the understanding.

23 See also Clark 2013 and the integration of his theories in Meineck 2017.

24 For the importance of human language in the development of consciousness, see Chap. 1 note 33. There is some debate about the extent to which cognitive function and narrative can be universalized. For an overview of recent debates and a nuanced presentation of the relationship between core cognitive operations and cultural variations, see Senzaki et al. 2014; cf. Kaplan et al. 2017.

25 Consider Wilson 2014:51: "Conscious mental life is built entirely from confabulation. It is a constant review of stories experienced in the past and competing stories invented for the future"; cf. Le Hunte and Golembiewski 2014, 75: "Thanks to storytelling, evolution can take place in a single lifetime. You don't need to die of thirst to realize that going into the

desert without water is a bad idea"; cf. Gottschall 2012:102: "The storytelling mind is a crucial evolutionary adaptation. It allows us to experience our lives as coherent, orderly, and meaningful. It also makes life more than a blooming, buzzing confusion."

26 See Gottschall 2012:99. Years of working on the human brain and reflecting on these studies have led Joe LeDoux to conclude "that consciousness is an interpreter of experience, a means by which we develop a self-story that we use to understand those motivations and actions that arise from non-conscious processes in our brains" (2015:5–6).

27 See Solomon, Greenberg, and Pyszczynski (2015:80–82) for the connection between mortal anxiety and both cultural discourse and individual narratives; cf. their chapter on symbolic immortality (103–15) on how myth functions as a coping mechanism for fear of death. For the end of this *Odyssey* and the notion that endings are about death, see Buchan 2004.

28 "The more endings we get, the more we feel we are in the general area of The End, but also, the less confidence we feel that the 'real' end is necessarily the one for us" (Fowler 1997:21–22).

29 For this exchange, see Chapter 7.

30 On this line of thinking and the relationship between "newness" and traditionality, see D'Angour 2011 and the discussion in Chapter 7.

31 For characters' beliefs about Odysseus's death, see Barker and Christensen 2014:94–95; for Telemachus' desire, see Murnaghan 2002.

32 For a short analysis of the adjective *alastŏn*, see Barker and Christensen 2014:94–96; cf. Loraux 2006 (cited in Chapter 8).

33 Cf. Slatkin (1991:95–96) for Thetis; cf. Marks 2008:67–68. *Alastos* is perhaps from the root **lath*-, "escape memory"; cf. λανθάνω ("escape notice"); ἀληθής ("true"); λήθη ("forgetfulness"). It is related by folk etymology to ἀλάστωϱ (*alástōr*, "avenger") as "one who does not forget"; see Chaintraine s.v. ἀλάστωϱ. The root is productive in verbs like *alastein* (ἀλαστεῖν, "to be angry") and the compound *epalastein* (ἐπαλαστεῖν, "to be troubled"), which appears in Homer at *Od*. 1.252: τὸν δ' ἐπαλαστήσασα πϱοσηύδα Παλλὰς Ἀθήνη; cf. Eustath. *Comm. ad Il*. II 4.613.

34 See Chapter 8.

35 Zisook and Shear 2009:69; they go on to describe a "maladaptive" excess of avoidance and obsession leading to social isolation.

36 See Boss 1999:129; Zisook and Shear 2009:70–71: for "complicated grief treatment," which "combines cognitive behavioral techniques with aspects of interpersonal psychotherapy and motivational interviewing"; cf. Shear et al. 2016.

37 Shay 1995:39–40; and 2002:172–175; For the importance of the communalization of trauma and the sharing of a community to limiting the maladaptive effects of trauma, see Morris 2015:49–51.

38 There may be an etymological connection between Penelope's name and "unweaving," in the lexical items πήνην λέπειν "strip the web"; see Wilamowitz-Moellendroff 1884:39; Schol. HPQ ad *Il*. 4.797 ex 13-14: "[Didymos] says that the name Penelope is formed from 'working on a robe,'" Πηνελόπην αὐτήν φησι λελέχθαι, παϱὰ τὸ πένεσθαι τὸ λῶπος; cf. West 2014:105. Alternatively, some scholars offer "Weaving-Unraveler" πήνη and ὀλόπτω: Kretschmer 1945:82–83; Lowenstam 2000:346. Also: πήνη λώπη: "woof-robe," see Peradotto 1990:107; cf. Clayton 2004:35; For the waterfowl πηνέλοψ and earlier scholarship,

see Levaniouk 1999 (and 2011, chap. 17).

39 Lowenstam 2000 outlines the major differences; cf. the extensive discussion by Levaniouk 2011, chap. 15.

40 For the robe Penelope gives to Odysseus in disguise, see Whallon 2000.

41 See Lowenstam 2000:339–41.

42 On weaving and female fame, see also Mueller 2010. Murnaghan 2011:95-96: Penelope is also a weaver of plots. On weaving in the *Odyssey* and *mētis*, see Slatkin 1996:234–37; Clayton 2004, passim.

43 E.g., Austin 1975:253; and Peradotto 1990:83–84. For the possibility that in other traditions of Odysseus's return, Laertes and Penelope were colluding, see Haller 2013 with bibliography for the longstanding debates.

44 See, again, Clayton 2004:38.

45 See Marks 2008 for Eupeithes as a ritual scapegoat, drawing on Girard 1977.

46 Consider as a parallel the controversy over the use of propranolol to impede the encoding of traumatic memories, discussed by Morris 2015:216–20. Post-trauma therapy creates a type of amnesty, or a narrative to accommodate experiences, whereas propranolol effects a transformative oblivion.

47 The end of the *Iliad* may be deceptively closed in this way: many interpretive puzzles are left by its ending and the closure effected by Hektor's funeral overshadows the many other stories that remain to be told.

48 See Harmon-Jones et al. 2015 for the relationship between cognitive discrepancy and dissonance reduction.

49 See Candiotto 2015.

50 For a succinct articulation of extended mind theory—which posits that other people and the environment function as an essential part of the functioning of human minds—see Clark and Chalmers 1998; cf. the longer exploration in Logan 2007. For intermental thought and the importance of "social minds" for understanding how fiction works, see Palmer 2010:49–55.

Conclusion

Escaping (the) Story's Bounds

> καὶ οὐδ' οὕτως ἀπαλλαγῇ τῶν πόνων, ἀλλ' ὅταν παντελῶς ἔξαλος γένηται καὶ ἐν ψυχαῖς ἀπείροις θαλασσίων καὶ ἐνύλων ἔργων, ὡς πτύον εἶναι ἡγεῖσθαι τὴν κώπην διὰ τὴν τῶν ἐναλίων ὀργάνων καὶ ἔργων παντελῆ ἀπειρίαν.
>
> And thus he may not escape from his toils, but when he has emerged from the sea fully his thoughts are so untouched of the sea and material matters that he believes that an oar is a winnowing shovel because of his total inexperience of the tools and affairs of the sea.
>
> Porphyry, *On the Cave of the Nymphs* 35

In this book, I have used ideas from modern psychology to explore how the *Odyssey* depicts the workings of human minds and how it marks the ways that narrative shapes us. In the first few chapters, I emphasized how the epic's presentation of characters under psychological distress and how its dramatization of Telemachus and Odysseus emerging from states of diminished agency resonates with modern frameworks of cognitive psychology and therapeutic treatment. Then, in subsequent chapters, I explored how the ability to control the story is clearly related to the recuperation of personal identity and the exercise of agency both in and through narrative. Storytelling, however, does not occur merely in the personal realm: audiences, communities, and collective identities are engaged as well. As a result, in the championing of narrative's potential, the epic has other, less positive, stories to tell. The impact of narrative on human lives can be both helpful and deeply harmful, as I highlighted in Chapters 5–7 and in exploring the epic's challenging final book. The abrupt ending of the *Odyssey* pits different kinds of paradigmatic narratives against each other in a clash that can only be resolved by an arbitrary intervention. In doing so, the epic invites us to think about closure and how stories end. In teasing at the overlapping threads of lives lived and the stories lived through them, the epic also prompts us to think about our own life as story and the stories it tells as a different kind of life.

An additional trick of the epic's closing is the promise—or even

assurance—that its story has not, in fact, ended. In part, this is a response to the theme of closure explored in the last chapter, the paradox that, while we want to know how a story ends, we do not want it to actually end because we understand that the end of a story is a type of death and possibly a rebirth. Teiresias's prophecy, as told by Odysseus, may engage with this theme too (11.119–37; cf. 23.265–84):

αὐτὰϱ ἐπὴν μνηστῆϱας ἐνὶ μεγάϱοισι τεοῖσι
ϰτείνῃς ἠὲ δόλῳ ἢ ἀμφαδὸν ὀξέϊ χαλϰῷ,
ἔϱχεσθαι δὴ ἔπειτα, λαβὼν εὐῆϱες ἐϱετμόν,
εἰς ὅ ϰε τοὺς ἀφίϰηαι, οἳ οὐϰ ἴσασι θάλασσαν
ἀνέϱες οὐδέ θ' ἅλεσσι μεμιγμένον εἶδαϱ ἔδουσιν·
οὐδ' ἄϱα τοὶ ἴσασι νέας φοινιϰοπαϱῄους,
οὐδ' εὐήϱε' ἐϱετμά, τά τε πτεϱὰ νηυσὶ πέλονται.
σῆμα δέ τοι ἐϱέω μάλ' ἀϱιφϱαδές, οὐδέ σε λήσει·
ὁππότε ϰεν δή τοι ξυμβλήμενος ἄλλος ὁδίτης
φήῃ ἀθηϱηλοιγὸν ἔχειν ἀνὰ φαιδίμῳ ὤμῳ,
ϰαὶ τότε δὴ γαίῃ πήξας εὐῆϱες ἐϱετμόν,
ἔϱξας ἱεϱὰ ϰαλὰ Ποσειδάωνι ἄναϰτι,
ἀϱνειὸν ταῦϱόν τε συῶν τ' ἐπιβήτοϱα ϰάπϱον,
οἴϰαδ' ἀποστείχειν ἔϱδειν θ' ἱεϱὰς ἑϰατόμβας
ἀθανάτοισι θεοῖσι, τοὶ οὐϱανὸν εὐϱὺν ἔχουσι,
πᾶσι μάλ' ἑξείης. θάνατος δέ τοι ἐξ ἁλὸς αὐτῷ
ἀβληχϱὸς μάλα τοῖος ἐλεύσεται, ὅς ϰέ σε πέφνῃ
γήϱᾳ ὕπο λιπαϱῷ ἀϱημένον· ἀμφὶ δὲ λαοὶ
ὄλβιοι ἔσσονται. τὰ δέ τοι νημεϱτέα εἴϱω.

"But after you kill the suitors in your home
Either with a trick or openly with sharp bronze,
Then go, taking with you a well-shaped oar,
until you come to people who know nothing of the sea,
nor do they eat food that has been mixed with salt.
These people also know nothing of purple-prowed ships,
Nor well-shaped oars, which are wings for ships
I will speak to you an obvious sign and it will not escape you.
Whenever some other traveler meets you and says
that you have a winnowing fan on your fine shoulder,
At that very point drive the well-shaped oar in the ground
And offer a fine sacrifice to lord Poseidon-
a lamb, a bull, and a boar, which has loved sows,

Then go home and offer a holy hecatomb
To the immortal gods who live in the broad sky,
Every last one of them. And then from the sea death will come
To you, a very gentle one, and it will kill you,
Already taken by a prosperous old age. Your people
Will be prosperous around you. I speak these things truly."

For an attentive audience—and indeed, for one steeped in the traditions of Odysseus outside the *Odyssey*—the epic's sudden ending may be merely a scene break, an end to this particular story with the implicit guaranty that another will continue.[51] (Or, even, that this story will happen again). But if we are to consider the epic from a psychological view that prizes the development of an individual mind, then questions about the process or development of this mind must linger. What kind of a person will live beyond this story? According to Teiresias' prophecy, Odysseus still has to make amends with Poseidon. So, again, we are returned to a world that is somehow predetermined, where an externally imposed causal logic drives the story. From this perspective, Odysseus's journey is a type of expiation. We might even argue that this is the price Odysseus must pay for the success and agency he briefly enjoys. Given the Odysseus we have come to know, however, there remains the promise that this journey to satisfy the gods will also be one he takes to satisfy something of his self.

As with many details in the *Odyssey*, however, we have only Odysseus to trust: he is the one who narrates the prophecy for the Phaeacians and for us. As John Peradotto has argued, Odysseus's telling of the prophecy introduces a degree of indeterminacy (1980; 1990), a theme Ann Bergren picks up in arguing that in its closing, the epic "acknowledges the inherent instability of (re)turn" (2008:100). Such narrative instability invites disambiguation from the audience. Indeed, Odysseus himself seems to begin this: when he tells the story a second time, he introduces a minor variation in its framing. In Book 23, after he and Penelope have been reunited, Odysseus does not come straight out and reveal the prophecy to his wife. Instead, he merely outlines that there will be more troubles and uses language of toil and suffering, which is familiar from the rest of the epic (23.248–53):

ὦ γύναι, οὐ γάϱ πω πάντων ἐπὶ πείϱατ' ἀέθλων
ἤλθομεν, ἀλλ' ἔτ' ὄπισθεν ἀμέτϱητος πόνος ἔσται,
πολλὸς ϰαὶ χαλεπός, τὸν ἐμὲ χϱὴ πάντα τελέσσαι.
ὣς γάϱ μοι ψυχὴ μαντεύσατο ΤειϱεσίαοΤειϱεσίαο

ἤματι τῷ, ὅτε δὴ κατέβην δόμον Ἄϊδος εἴσω,
νόστον ἑταίροισιν διζήμενος ἠδ' ἐμοὶ αὐτῷ.

"Wife, we have not yet come to the end of all our struggles
But toil without measure is still in front of us,
Great and hard toil, all the things which I have to complete.
For this is how the spirit of Teiresias prophesied it to me
On that day when I went to the home of Hades
To inquire about my companions' homecoming and my own."

Note the reappearance of some thematic language of Odysseus's toil and suffering. The repetitions evoke continuity or even a return to what was there before the return and reunion. Similarly, the narrative strategy carries on: Odysseus does not reveal everything right away, but he leaves some suspense. For the external audience, this creates anticipation concerning which details the hero will share with his wife. But such suspense may also banish Penelope to her earlier marginalized state. For someone who has suffered so much in this epic from not knowing the outcome of events—with the paralysis that comes from grief that is unresolved—Penelope is compelled to ask Odysseus to tell her (260–62), ending with a gnomic plea that "it is not at all worse to know right away" (αὐτίκα δ' ἐστὶ δαήμεναι οὔ τι χέρειον).[52] Odysseus prepares to recite the prophecy, but begins differently (23.265–68):

... αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ μυθήσομαι οὐδ' ἐπικεύσω.
οὐ μέν τοι θυμὸς κεχαρήσεται· οὐδὲ γὰρ αὐτὸς
χαίρω, ἐπεὶ μάλα πολλὰ βροτῶν ἐπὶ ἄστε' ἄνωγεν
ἐλθεῖν, ἐν χείρεσσιν ἔχοντ' εὐῆρες ἐρετμόν.

"But I will tell you and I will not hide it.
And your heart will certainly not take pleasure in it. For even I take no joy
Since he ordered me to go again through countless cities of men
Holding a well-shaped oar in my hands ..."

Again, in keeping with the rest of the epic, Odysseus claims transparency, while he delivers something different. Even though he goes on to deliver the prophecy almost verbatim, Odysseus may still hold something back, protesting too much that he will not enjoy what the future brings. His fate, he claims, is that he is ordered to go through many cities of men. And he suggests this without relating it to Teiresias's prophecy that he will

die after living a prosperous life. The absence of future travels through "countless cities of men" in the earlier narration alone would be telling, but it is even more marked because it recalls the third line of the epic's proem: πολλῶν δ' ἀνθρώπων ἴδεν ἄστεα καὶ νόον ἔγνω ("and he knew the cities and thought of many peoples," 1.3).[53] This traveling through many cities for which Odysseus is famous enough to be marked at the beginning of the poem does not really happen in our epic. Here, Odysseus places his famous wandering in a future yet to happen, among toils still to be suffered. In a way, we as audience hear the promise of another epic about to start anew.

Note, as well, that Odysseus's tale of the future undoes much of what the Homeric *Odyssey* accomplishes. His future toils and exploits are his alone: there is no room for the lives of his son, elderly father, or wife. So, even though Odysseus is home and reunited with his family, this new revelation is enough to imply that when this story is over, Odysseus returns to himself, *the one* before the *Odyssey* brought him home again. We hear an echo of this, I think, in C. P. Cavafy's startling poem on the topic ("Second Odyssey," trans. Kaiser):

> The affection of Telemachus, the loyalty
> Of Penelope, his father's aging years,
> His old friends, the love
> Of his devoted subjects,
> The peace and repose of his home
> Bored him.
> And so he left.

Here, Cavafy is likely drawing on Odysseus's tale of his Cretan self to Eumaios (discussed in Chapter 5). That version of Odysseus is an inveterate and restless wanderer. It is certainly not strange to imagine such a man growing restless again. There are, of course, many possible interpretations of Odysseus's caginess in the *Odyssey*. If we consider him again as a person who has been traumatized, we might justifiably posit that he is, in fact, ruing his future, even as he feels the gravitational pull of who he was on who he has become again. He cannot rest fully or take complete joy in what he has gained because the knowledge of what he must face hangs over him. And this can also easily map onto an anxiety about death (which I will discuss in a moment). But from the perspective of Narrative Therapy and the epic as an exploration of a human being struggling with life and trying to take control of narrative, this scene is

also about relapse and the stubborn persistence of a character shaped by repeated experience. So, even though Odysseus's future is a return to a character type well-known to his audiences, it is also a regression to the character who survived *this* epic, a character well known to ancient audiences. He has faced his challenges, regained his agency, and yet, *more* life still remains to be lived. And this wandering warrior does not know how to live it with a family. Just as that version of Odysseus explored through his Cretan tales seems to be one untethered to wife or child, so too does the future Odysseus float free of familial connections.

Alfred Tennyson's "Ulysses" is another reception of Odysseus to echo some of these themes. The poem begins with frustration, the complaint that it is useless for a king to sit and rule inferior men with an aging wife, a crowd that cannot understand him (1–5). Tennyson's Odysseus has retreated into an interior life, rejecting the dismal repetition of his days at home, and imagining himself as he once was. For this hero, time at home is composed of wasted opportunities. The poem's Ulysses confesses, "I cannot rest from travel: I will drink / Life to the lees ..." (6–7). This Ulysses anticipates a coming transformation: "... I am become a name" (11, a common trope in Tennyson's poetry), and this name is made up of his travels, his suffering, and his joys (11–20). The narrator continues (20–30):

> How dull it is to pause, to make an end,
> To rust unburnish'd, not to shine in use!
> As tho' to breathe were life! Life piled on life
> Were all too little, and of one to me
> Little remains: but every hour is saved
> From that eternal silence, something more,
> A bringer of new things; and vile it were
> For some three suns to store and hoard myself,
> And this gray spirit yearning in desire
> To follow knowledge like a sinking star,
> Beyond the utmost bound of human thought.

Although in the next portion of the poem, Ulysses looks briefly back at the world he leaves to his son (31–42), this passage homes in on the *Odyssey*'s hero in a different light. Odysseus is looking forward to the coming boundary of death and remains determined to inhabit life and atomize it, turning what remains into something like Zeno's paradox, as if by filling every portion of it, he may always have another portion to fill.

As is clear from the prophecy itself (discussed below), *boundaries* and *limits* are at the very core of his worry. And the final line—"to follow knowledge like a sinking star / beyond the utmost bound of human thought"—evokes the limits of both human experience and precedent. Tennyson's Ulysses is trying to escape the borders of his own story, to seek a realm as yet unwritten.

Tennyson's Ulysses returns to the sea, just as the *Odyssey*'s protagonist foretells he will journey inland. He narrates a journey through the space of the sea that is also a straining against the boundaries of time. This final battle, personal if epic still, culminates in Tennyson's closing, grasping boast: "To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield." But to what is this Odysseus yielding? The story of the prophecy is ultimately that of an externally imposed compulsion. In its simplest form, this is death. In the more complex vision of the poem, this is fate, the very thing Zeus says men make worse through their own recklessness at the beginning of the epic.

One interpretation, then, is that Odysseus is looking forward to the end of his story, to his own death. And here we can imagine another metapoetic reflection: Odysseus's story ends alone, a reflection of the truth of human internal life: those of us who do not pass away in our sleep or in a fugue state witness our own passing in a way that is ultimately incommunicable to others. And when we know that the milestones of life and perhaps our greatest accomplishments are behind us, many of us naturally look toward the end on the horizon. This is a different type of helplessness from what Odysseus endures during his exile with Kalypso: when he is stranded on Ogygia, he has nowhere to go and all the time in the world (and literally so, if he accepts the goddess's offer of immortality). Once he gets home, he can go anywhere, but where has all that time gone? In a way, Odysseus continues on the journey of his life rather than stopping and facing the reality around him. In other tales, once a hero completes his great deeds, he metaphorically and literally challenges death only—ultimately, to fail. The *fall* of a hero is an allegory for what happens to us all when we are no longer young, but not yet old: we either scan the horizon for our ending, or run to avoid looking for it at all.

But I think there may be another allegory beyond this one. As Alex Purves (2006) notes, following others, Odysseus's emphasis on the fact that they are not at "the limits of all their suffering" (πάντων ἐπὶ πείρατ' ἀέθλων) and on the "boundless toil" (ἀμέτρητος πόνος) strains against the limits of the narrative and the poem.[54] So, at a metapoetic level, this is

in part a symbol about exceeding the bounds of a genre. But this epic is also about the boundaries of a life as it is lived. To look for the experiences of the life beyond the story we are living is to look for the promise that *our story* will not end. And, again, in that oar—as Alex Purves notes—we find a promise of transformation, as the relationship between signifier and signified breaks down.[55] The oar becomes a thing it was not, when it is transported into different lands and, once planted, it is a "clear sign," a *sēma* of what has been accomplished. In the *Iliad* (7.81–91), a *sēma* is the burial mound that will tell the story of what has transpired to future generations. It reduces a living thing to a still, singular sign of the past.[56] Here is the paradox of *kleos*, as articulated by Achilles's rejection of the Iliadic ethos in the *Odyssey* when his ghost tells Odysseus not to lie about death, because now he would rather be a servant to a poor farmer than lord among the dead (11.488–503): the story that continues on and does not change is not the *self*. The memory of the person is not the person remembered.

And in the *Odyssey*, it has already been established that an oar can function as the marker for a tomb; this is precisely what Elpenor requests when he meets Odysseus after dying (11.68–78). As a marker, a tombstone is final and, without readers who know its multiple meanings, simple rather than complex.[57] The single sign in the future Teiresias promises stands at odds with the multiplicity of meanings within the *Odyssey* and the multiple versions of the man whose tale it tells. So, while others have argued well that the prophecy anticipates a day and a place beyond the bounds of the heroic world, of epic meaning, and the range of epic transmission, I would add that this moment also reflects anxiety about the limits of the self.

> Καὶ οὐκέτι ταῦτα μῦθος οὐδὲ ποίησις, ἀλλὰ ἀλήθεια καὶ φυσικὸς λόγος.
>
> These things are no longer myth and poetry, but the truth and an account of nature.
>
> Porphyry, *On Styx*

I anticipate a range of objections to the overall approach of this book and to particular decisions made about which modern psychological ideas to apply to certain parts of the epic. Of these criticisms, I am eager to hear many of the second category, because the range of modern psychology and cognitive science that I do not know or over which I have too limited a command grows every day. And, almost equally important, interpreters

with different experiences of the worlds of the body and the mind may bring distinctive perspectives to bear on the same questions. Indeed, my desired outcome for this book is that it will raise more questions than answers and prompt others to make similar investigations in the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad*.

When it comes to a critique of the overall strategy—that it is anachronistic, culturally inappropriate, or otherwise lacking rigor–I can offer two points for defense. The first, which is quite simple, is that this has not been an unreflective exercise of positivistic historicism, making the claim that these clinical and theoretical perspectives existed and were understood as such in the ancient world. Rather, this has been a type of reception, to read the *Odyssey* with ideas from modern theories and culture as a guide. Each generation and culture has the ability and even, I dare say, the duty to engage in a similar process.

My second defense starts with a simple assertion. In reading the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* today, we also often emphasize a naïve type of literal reception on the part of ancient audiences and ignore a tradition of philosophical allegorical interpretation, which, as Robert Lamberton has shown, was popular from the late Archaic period through the rise of Christianity.[58] Before closing this book, I would just like to survey the allegorical tradition in brief to emphasize the way that Homeric interpreters found deeper and deeply psychological meaning in the poems long before the advent of the discipline of psychology.[59]

To start, the epic itself acknowledges that its own interpretability is challenging—it offers multiple readings and then toys with them. And as Purves, Bergren, and Peradotto have insisted, the epic's end and anticipation of its own reception invites interpretation through the introduction of indeterminacy. In the ancient world, such a challenging narrative would possibly be treated with allegory. As ancient authors defined it, allegory is a poetic device where words signify something other than what they literally say.[60] Sustained allegorical interpretations of Homer were common as early as the late 5th century BCE, where we find Socrates complaining that most people do not understand that the epics are allegorical and Xenophon recording the pre-Socratic philosopher's lengthy allegory of Herakles' "choice" (*Memorabilia* II.1.1).[61] As many scholars have noted (e.g., Small 1949; cf. Lamberton 1986), Homeric poetry is conscious of symbolic meaning and includes allegory within it: the *Iliad* has clear allegories in Phoinix's parable of the Litai (Book 9) or Achilles's tale of Zeus's urns of good and evil (Book 24).[62] Although the *Odyssey* has fewer clear allegories than the *Iliad*, Penelope's comments on

dreams (Book 19) present a symbolic meaning that derives part of its force from a coded understanding of word derivations (see Small 1949:426).

But there is also a tradition of treating the *Odyssey* as an extended allegory. Ancient interpreters who pursued this could be quite adventurous, as when Porphyry explains that the tales of Kirkē are really a coded message about reincarnation and the way the soul's rebirth in corporeal form is dictated by its relationship to its desires—its ability to balance the rational (*to logistikon*), the emotional (*thumoeides*), and physical (or appetitive) desires (*epithumētikon*). In this reading, these parts (*ta merē*) of the soul may be regulated—or at least ameliorated—by education and philosophy.[63] Heraclitus similarly allegorizes Odysseus's wanderings, claiming that Homer "displayed his own philosophy through him" (70.2) because he hated the vices that rule human life.[64] So, for Heraclitus, each step of the journey in the *Apologoi* was an opportunity to display Odysseus's resistance to pleasure and temptation: the Lotus eaters are exotic delights; Polyphemos represents victory over anger; Skylla is shamelessness; and the cattle of the sun are gluttony, etc. (70.3–13).[65] Elsewhere, Heraclitus follows earlier traditions in assigning the gods allegorical functions within the human body: Hermes becomes a symbol of the speech and reason by which Odysseus resists Kirkē's wiles (72–73).[66] The earlier Metrodorus of Lampascus (fifth century BCE) imagines that each of the gods should be allegorized as a part of the human body—in one fragment, he suggests that Demeter is the liver, Dionysus is the spleen and Apollo is bile/anger (τῶν δὲ θεῶν τὴν Δήμητρα μὲν ἧπαρ, τὸν Διόνυσον δὲ σπλῆνα, τὸν Ἀπόλλω δὲ χολήν, frag. 4).[67]

One would not require too adventurous of a mind to hear similarities in the allegories of Porphyry, Heraclitus, and Metrodorus for the relationship between Freudian ego, superego and id or, perhaps more appropriately, a Lacanian fragmentation of warring inclinations beneath the conscious self. Indeed, in his famous essay, *On the Cave of the Nymphs*, Porphyry allegorizes even the Kyklops as part of Odysseus's self, representing an impulse to escape the life of senses through violence. Porphyry thus asserts that Homer names the harbor he first comes to in Ithaca after the Kyklops's maternal grandfather (Phorkys, the father of Thoosa, Polyphemos's mother) as a "reminder of his mistakes" (ἵνα καὶ ἄχρι τῆς πατρίδος ὑπῇ τι τῶν ἁμαρτημάτων μνημόσυνο, 35).[68] Heraclitus, too, calls anger "the Kyklops, the one who streals away our faculties of reason" (Κύκλωψ δὲ οὗτος ὠνόμασται, ὁ τοὺς λογισμοὺς ὑποκλωπῶν, *Homeric Problems* 70).

These allegorists saw reflexes of their understanding of the nature of

the universe in the epic and were willing to read the events of the *Odyssey* as representations of different forces in Odysseus's mind. While modern readers pay little mind to their theories, it is worth noting that the allegorists were closer in time, space, and culture to the performance of Homeric epic than we are and that they reflect a longstanding assumption that the poems convey multiple levels of meaning.

Ultimately, of course, the effectiveness of any interpretation relies on the audiences who are willing to entertain it and the interpreter's ability to make the case that the leaps of faith required to do so are worth it in the end. As a deeply polysemic text, the *Odyssey* both countermands simple interpretations and invites a contemplative and non-reductive engagement. Indeed, in its ruminations on the functions of the human mind, the relationship between individuals and communities, and the impact of story in and on life, the *Odyssey* provides deep and prolonged opportunities for considering how and why we make meaning of the world.

In its closing moves and the promise that Odysseus must continue on, the *Odyssey* offers some final signals for the relationship between mind and narrative and between the individual and life. The journey with the oar as prophesied by Teiresias and explored in the poems of Cavafy and Tennyson is an imagined future beyond the bounds of the story that has been experienced. This corresponds structurally to Odysseus's gaze across the sea when we first encounter him in Book 5, but it resonates thematically with the gaze of *Infinite Jest*'s Don Gately, with which I began the Introduction. Through the prophecy, Odysseus and his audience are invited to look beyond their experience and their own narratives to the unknown and to the life outside the story, just as Gately turns from his stories to the sea in his final moments. The oar, which becomes a winnowing fan, is a symbol both of death and the escape from narrative itself. In its transformation, then, it may model a promise of liberation from paradigmatic thinking. As Alex Purves has argued, the oar Odysseus must carry to a foreign land contains a metaphor for epic narrative and the idea of moving beyond the bounds of epic poetry.[69] So one message this symbol provides is about the life and meaning a story may take on after the end of the poem.[70] But the oar is also a type of cenotaph, it can stand for something that is not there and in its indeterminacy reinforces the epic's move away from clearly determined to more open-ended meanings. But, both couched within this message and around it are, I think, additional possible messages about the end of life, as I discussed above, and the continuation of life beyond the story.

Odysseus's journey into the land beyond epic and beyond the boundedness of his life on Ithaca is an allegory for death. The hero transforms in this understanding from a person who tells stories and struggles with the stories that shape him to a story told by an object, the *sēma*, which is his grave, and the *sēmata*, which are the stories told about him. In this transformation, Odysseus leaves his family and city and the person he made himself into necessarily, insofar as the journey toward the end of life may be seen as an inversion of the journey at the beginning. Odysseus's prophesied journey away from Ithaca replicates in reverse his journey back from Ogygia toward personhood. Here, too, there are parallels from modern theories of consciousness. If, as Daniel C. Dennett (e.g., 1991; 2017) argues, our progress toward consciousness is gradual and relies on experience, community, language, and biology, then our journey away from consciousness towards death in old age is an inversion of the same process. Anyone of us who has watched an aged relative or a loved one ravaged by an encroaching sickness can testify that death is often preceded by an inexorable unmaking of the self. So, just as the beginning and the middle of the epic dramatize the emergence into consciousness and agency of Telemachus and Odysseus and then shows how they maintain their sense of self and use narrative to impact their world, the end of the poem anticipates the dissolution of the self towards death. The predicted final journey is about the stripping away of consciousness, along with the ebbing of the senses and the loss of memory.

In this way, Odysseus's inland journey is a regression and a simplification of his narrative powers (and his story) as an echo of aging and death. As such, the epic provides an allegory for what even the best and strongest of its audience members must necessarily face should they live too long. But I would not want to leave this as the only interpretation or end this book on a somber note. Another possible interpretation, which may overlap with this allegory for aging and death, engages with the themes of controlling the narrative and being controlled by narrative that I explored in this book. The prophecy of the oar may be an additional step in the liberation from the tyranny of story.

In my Introduction, I outlined Jerome Bruner's distinction between paradigmatic and narrative thought. Even though the *Odyssey* offers many different types of narrative, its story dramatizes how narratives can form precedents and trap people into destructive patterns of thought and choices. This is, at its core, the crisis of the overlapping demands of the cycle of vengeance examined in the epic's final book. Both Eupeithes and

Odysseus must respond to paradigmatic narratives, must play roles shaped for them by external discourse. Indeed, different layers of cultural narrative assign nearly unavoidable sequences of events and actions to all of the epic's players. By offering the promise of a world beyond epic, where signs of meaning may somehow signify differently, the epic offers a path away from restrictive discourse, which is the journey away from epic itself.

On a rather literal level, to be within the bounds of a poem—or someone else's story—is to be subject to the control and limits of that narrative's authority. If we accept the basic argument that the epic shows Odysseus coming to terms with narrative and learning to control it and that his return to Ithaca shows him hemmed in again by other narratives, then the promise of moving beyond the bounds of story and epic is one of regaining control of life by making your own story. This is, I think, a different way of reading the indeterminacy and instability that Bergren and Peradotto sense in Teiresias's prophecy and the epic's end. We learn from the first half of the epic that human beings can wrest control of narrative in order to become fuller agents in their lives; but by the epic's end, we have (re)learned how thoroughly pervasive paradigmatic discourse can be. The misread sign of the oar in the land of the winnowing fan offers up the possibility that the signs or stories we think have absolute meaning can gain new meaning in different contexts. To return to the language of mental states used earlier, the internal state operates under the weight of meaning imposed from without; an intentional state imposes meaning on the world. The radical promise of redefining the most concrete of signifiers—the oar—suggests a world in which all definitions may be re-authored in time.

Even though Odysseus enforces his authority through narrative and enjoys the benefit of cultural discourses that favor him above and beyond others, the epic shows that he too is constrained by the stories he encounters in the world and by the stories others tell about him. In warning about the dangers of narrative and showing that mastering narrative is essential to gaining control of one's life, the *Odyssey* may offer its audiences a final lesson on moving beyond the boundaries of discourse and narrative or, at the very least, about the possibility of moving beyond the limits of the stories that are already told (and their interpretation). The epic does not say this will be an easy journey; it is full, as all journeys are, of suffering and deprivation and, in Odysseus's case, it may require the abandonment of relationships, communities, and state. But this still holds the promise that we can take control of our own stories and lead lives that

have different meanings from the ones we lived before.

τούς τε γραμματικοὺς ἐθαύμαζε τὰ μὲν τοῦ Ὀδυσσέως κακὰ ἀναζητοῦντας, τὰ δ' ἴδια ἀγνοοῦντας.

[Diogenes] was amazed that scholars were studying Odysseus' sufferings but remained ignorant of their own.

Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Philosophers* 6.27

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51 For *nostos* narratives outside the *Odyssey* see Barker and Christensen 2015 with bibliography; for alternative traditions of Odysseus see Gantz 1992:703–12.

52 Murnaghan (2011:106) notes that Penelope is "willing to sacrifice all happiness for the sake of knowing the truth."

53 On the unclear identity of these cities (i.e. whether they are the cities of this *Odyssey* or another one), see Nagy 1990: 231-33

54 See Purves 2006:8 (with notes 10 and 11); see also Peradotto 1990:68, 89–90; Bergren 1983:50–54. cf. Buchan (2004:234–35) for the meaning of this boundlessness.

55 For the *sēma* as a signifier, see Purves 2006, note 18; cf. Murnaghan 1987:150–51; and Nagy 1990:215.

56 On the significance of the oar as *sēma* in burial for hero cult, see Nagy 1999 [1979]: 289-95; 1990b:21415. Cf. the extended discussion at Nagy 2013: 331-45.

57 For the oar as Elpenor's grave-marker and an anticipation of Odysseus's death, see Purves 2006 and Benardete 1996:94.

58 For allegorical readings of the Homeric poems traced to 6th/5th century Pythagorean traditions, see Lamberton1986:32–36.

59 Cf. Russel and Konstan (2005: xxv) against dismissing allegorical reading.

60 By the time of Cicero (*De Oratore* 3.41.166) and then Quintilian (8.6.44), it was common to specify an extended allegory as a use of continuous metaphor. Thompson (1973, chap. 2) provides a fine overview of these histories. On the definition of allegory in ancient Greece, see Lamberton 1986:20–21. For Samuel Coleridge's elevation of the symbol over allegory in response to German Romantic philosophy, see Halmi 2009. Todorov (1975:63) opposes the mimetic mode to the allegorical in the reader's interpretation. Such a distinction, however, ignores the natural cognitive blending of representation and experience in the mind of an audience as discussed by Turner 1996.

61 Cf. Lamberton's assertion that the epics "contain a complex model of perception" (1986:2) and that "It is difficult to say whether there was ever a time when the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were *not* viewed as possessing this potential to reveal meanings beyond the obvious" (21).

62 See Pfeiffer 1968:5; Lamberton 1986:132. A Pythagorean tradition made Paris's decision allegorical and the entire Trojan War about one man's lack of self control: see Lamberton 1986:35; cf. Iamblichus, *Life of Pythagoras* 42.

63 Porphyry also claims that the process of rebirth itself is allegorized through Kirkē and her island. The animal forms given to men in the *Odyssey*, then, are representations of the savageness of ungoverned souls. For Numenius as understanding Odysseus as going through successive stages of genesis, see Lamberton 1986:71.

64 ἀρετῆς καθάπερ ὄργανόν τι τὸν Ὀδυσσέα παραστησάμενος ἑαυτῷ διὰ τοῦτο πεφιλοσόφηκεν, ἐπειδὴ τὰς ἐνεμομένας τὸν ἀνθρώπινον βίον ἤχθηρε κακίας.

65 Cicero interpreted the Sirens as singers who tempt men with knowledge and understanding of everything (*de Finibus* 5.18.48); see Small (1949:426–27) for this and for Homeric allegories in Horace as well.

66 Allegorical scholia to the *Odyssey* echo this approach. For example, Schol. E. ad *Od*. 1.38 allegorizes Hermes as a clear force of reason. Cf. Lamberton (1986:222) for Proclus's reading of the *Odyssey* as representing navigation "between pleasure and abstention."

67 He is also accredited with the less surprising interpretation that Zeus represents the human mind and Athena is skill (ἑρμηνεύουσι δὲ οἱ Ἀναξαγόρειοι τοὺς μυθώδεις θεοὺς νοῦν μὲν τὸν Δία, τὴν δὲ Ἀθηνᾶν τέχνην, frag. 6). See Obbink (2000:18–19) and Small (1949) for contextualization of these suggestions within the broader frame of Greek allegorical interpretations.

68 Cf. Lamberton (1986:131) who expands this: "The blinding of Polyphemus is a metaphor for suicide ... The cyclops becomes a part of Odysseus—a part he wants desperately to escape —but his ineptitude in handling his escape at that early point in his career involves him in an arduous spiritual journey."

69 Purves 2010:76–80.

70 See Purves 2010:88; Peradotto 1990:75–77; Barker and Christensen 2019, conclusion. For the oar as a symbol of the world of the dead, see Segal 1994:44.

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